# HANDBOOK

# FOR

# FRENCH IMMERSION

# ADMINISTRATORS

2002

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This publication is intended for school administrators of French immersion schools/programs including:

- Principals
- Assistant Principals
- Department Heads
- School Counsellors

This publication may also be of interest to:

- Trustees
- Superintendents
- Principals of schools/programs other than French immersion
- Teachers
- Consultants

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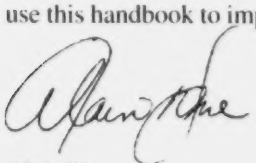
# Introduction

## A Word from the Acting Director, French Language Services Branch

Providing Alberta's students with the best education possible is the direct result of the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders. For students enrolled in Alberta's French immersion programs, it is imperative that parents, educators and trustees all work together to provide the best program possible.

This handbook, which includes a copy of *Yes, You Can Help!*, provides administrators with a theoretical basis as well as practical suggestions for successfully administering a French immersion program. The handbook was designed so that administrators would have the required knowledge to help parents with children in French immersion as well as to lead all school staff contributing to the program's success.

As Acting Director of French Language Services Branch, I encourage you to use this handbook to improve your French immersion program.



Alain Nogue
Acting Director
French Language Services Branch



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## Using this Handbook

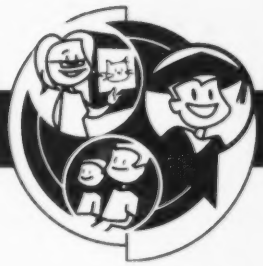
This handbook contains three major components: the main content in 12 chapters, the appendices, and the coil-bound *Yes, You Can Help!*

The binder format has been used to allow you to add material as desired. For example, should you design an instrument for interviewing prospective teachers for your school or program, you may want to include it in Chapter 5, Areas or Domains to Consider when Interviewing Prospective Staff Members, for future reference. Or, should you find an interesting research article, you may want to include a copy of it in the appropriate chapter or appendix.

The 12 main chapters and accompanying appendices provide an overview of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are deemed essential for successfully administering a French immersion program. Each chapter and its supporting appendix are accented with their own colour.

*Yes, You Can Help!* a publication intended for parents, is included because of its valuable information for assisting parents with children in the French immersion program. Administrators are encouraged to have a few copies in the school library available to parents.

# 1 The Immersion Approach: Principles and Practice



French immersion is a proven approach to second language learning developed in Canada in response to a desire of English-speaking parents to have their children become fluent in French. It is one of three French program streams offered in Alberta schools.

## Three Different French Program Streams Offered in Alberta

a

In Alberta today, there are three different French program streams, each designed to meet the needs and desired outcomes of a specific clientele: French immersion, French as a second language and French as a first language.

### French Immersion

- Designed for students whose family heritage is other than French (see page 9).
- A second language program in which **French is the language of instruction** for a significant part of the school day; several or all subjects, with the exception of English language arts, are taught in French.
- A program in which the desired outcomes for students are:
  - a high proficiency in the English language;
  - functional fluency in French;
  - an understanding and appreciation of francophone cultures; and
  - mastery of the skills and abilities identified in the core and complementary courses.
- A program with two entry points: early immersion begins in Kindergarten or Grade 1; late immersion begins in Grade 6 or 7. Both variations are intended to continue through Grade 12.
- An alternative program in Alberta. (*School Act*, 1988, s. 21. See also *School Act*, 1988, s. 11(1).)
- All students follow the Programs of Study set by Alberta Learning and are expected to achieve established standards.



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## French as a Second Language (FSL)

(most commonly known outside Alberta as core French)

- Designed for students whose family heritage is other than French.
- A second language program in which **French is taught as a subject or course** for one period a day or a few times a week for 30–40 minutes per day (see the Alberta Learning *Guide to Education*).
- A program in which the desired outcomes for students are:
  - a good foundation in French from which to pursue fluency; and
  - insights into and an appreciation of francophone cultures.
- A program most commonly offered beginning in Grade 4, 7 or 10.
- An alternative program in Alberta. (*School Act*, 1988, s. 21. See also *School Act*, 1988, s. 11(1).)
- All students follow the Programs of Study set by Alberta Learning and are expected to achieve established standards.

## French First Language

(also called francophone education)

- Intended for children of parents who have rights under s. 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (see sidebar).
- An education in French governed by a Francophone Regional authority.
- An education where the school environment, programming, and extra-curricular activities are delivered in French from K–12, with the exception of English Language Arts.
- An education where the desired outcomes for students are:
  - a high proficiency in French and a positive attitude towards French as a first language,
  - a high proficiency in English,
  - a sense of identity with and belonging to a francophone culture and community, and
  - mastery of the skills and abilities identified in the core and complementary courses.
- A K–12 education where eligible students may enter at any grade level.
- All students follow the Programs of Study set by Alberta Learning and are expected to achieve established standards.

**The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**
**Minority Language Education Rights (s. 23)**

(1) Citizens of Canada

(a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or

(b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province,

have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.

(3) The right of Citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province

(a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such rights is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and

(b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language education facilities provided out of public funds.

### For More Information

*Alberta Learning. Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents.* Revised Edition. Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002, pp. 8–12 and 27–28 (See Appendix A)

*What do I want for my child?/Qu'est-ce que je veux pour mon enfant?* Edmonton: [n.p.], 2000. (See Appendix A)


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## Program Goals

b

### Subject Content

To enable students to achieve levels of learning in all subjects commensurate with their abilities, whether they are taught in French or English.

### English

To enable students to achieve a level of competence in English Language Arts equivalent to English program students within three years of beginning instruction in English, and to maintain that equivalency through Grade 12.

### French

To enable students to become functionally fluent in French by the end of Grade 12, that is:

- to be able and willing to participate easily in conversations in French,
- to be able to pursue post-secondary education appropriate to their abilities and interests with French as the language of instruction, and
- to be able to accept employment where French is the language of work.

### Culture

To enable students to gain an understanding and appreciation of francophone cultures.

## Key Characteristics of Immersion

C

Six characteristics define a French immersion program:

- French is not the prevalent language of the child's community.
- French is acquired primarily by using it for meaningful communication within the school—that is, for instructions in subject areas (e.g. mathematics, social studies, science, music, drama, or physical education).
- The students begin not knowing French and instructional strategies and materials are designed with this in mind.
- The program begins with intensive instruction in French by teachers fluent in the language, with instruction in English initially delayed and often increasing in later years.
- Instruction of subject material is not repeated in English.
- The program is expected to take several years to achieve its goals. (In most cases, these goals are defined as of the end of Grade 12. See Program Goals above.)

The strong role of parents in establishing immersion programs and supporting their child is often also recognized as a key characteristic of the program.



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## How Immersion Works: In Brief

The immersion approach is based on our understanding of how children learn their first language: through interaction with meaningful content and the desire to use language to communicate ideas. Thus, throughout a French immersion program, students acquire French while they acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes prescribed by the Programs of Study.

Figure 1 below illustrates the principles and practices of this approach:

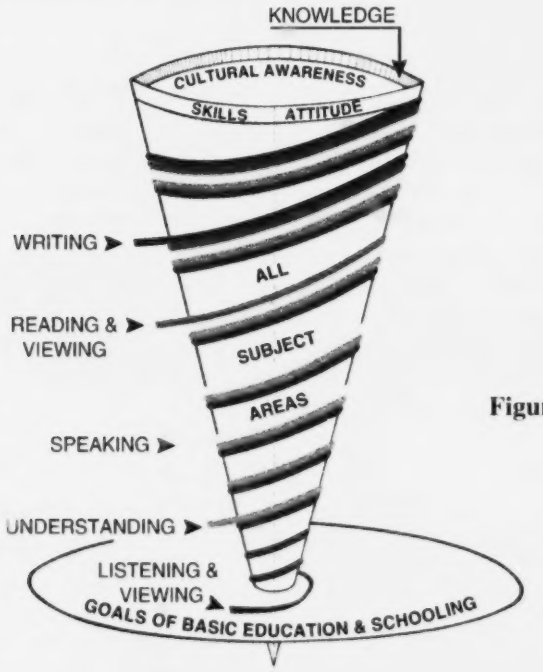


**Figure 1**

- The cone-shaped figure represents the knowledge, skills and attitudes all students are expected to acquire during their schooling.
- The elliptical base in which the cone is set represents the goals of basic education in Alberta.
- The various spherical lines encircling the cone represent the language skills which students are expected to acquire—listening and viewing, understanding, speaking, reading and viewing, and writing.
- The inside wall of the cone represents the cultural dimension inherent in different subjects. As students acquire French, they also learn about the achievements and contributions of Francophones in fields such as art, music, literature, science, technology and philosophy, as well as customs and traditions.
- The upward spiral depicts the nature of second language learning in immersion: the more students hear and use French in all subject areas, the better they understand it; the better they understand it, the more successful they become in all subject areas.


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## The Early Immersion Model

Early immersion, which begins in Kindergarten or Grade 1, is the most common delivery model in Alberta. Early immersion is based on our understanding that young children learn languages more easily than older learners.

Because students enter early immersion with little or no knowledge of French, the program begins with a concentration on French language development to give students a sufficient understanding of French to learn to read and write in French and learn subject area content in French.

Second language development is thought to occur readily in young children because:

- A young child's vocal structures are more flexible than an adult's, making the development of an authentic accent easier.
- Neurologists have found evidence of an energy spurt in the brain between ages four and 10 which is thought to make learning easier.
- Young children are more tolerant of ambiguity and do not feel as socially awkward when they find themselves in situations they do not understand.
- Young children have fewer attitudes and prejudices to interfere with second language acquisition.

### Listening and speaking skills

Listening and speaking skills are acquired in much the same way as a child learns his or her first language: first by observation and listening, then by association of sounds with gestures and objects, and finally by imitation and repetition. This approach is often called a "gentle" introduction to second language learning.

In the classroom, the teacher:

- uses French all of the time, except if the students' security is at risk (e.g. health or safety concerns)
- employs gestures, mime, objects and pictures to help students understand
- includes songs, rhymes, stories and routines to help familiarize students with words and concepts and to create a safe and predictable environment for using the language
- constantly listens and observes to verify what information the students understand, adapting speech and activities as necessary to convey meaning
- encourages the students to speak French, and corrects mistakes through repetition and role modeling
- constantly seeks opportunities for language development and takes advantage of situations in which language development can occur naturally and effectively

The students:

- learn to be very good listeners, because they have to pay close attention in order to understand what is happening in the classroom
- are encouraged to speak French all the time, but for the first couple of years may use English to express a complex thought for which they have not yet learned the required French words
- may not speak French outside of the classroom in the early grades, or they may use French sounds and words at play and sing French songs learned during class

As oral language development progresses, new vocabulary and language structures are introduced, first incidentally and later, as more complex material is introduced, methodically.

Developing and enriching oral expression is very important in immersion and generally precedes the development of written communication skills.



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Students have many opportunities to:

- listen to French being spoken by the teacher, before they are expected to fully comprehend it;
- listen and understand before speaking; and
- speak French before reading and writing it.

The formal study of grammar begins once the students have had sufficient experience in listening to, comprehending and speaking French.

Active listening, spontaneous speaking and oral feedback underlie language development throughout an immersion program from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Thus French music, films, visitors and lots of interaction are commonly used in the immersion classroom. Concerts, plays, public speaking, field trips, and even exchange programs are used to help round out the students' experiences with the language and enhance cultural understanding.

> "If you [repeatedly] go into an immersion classroom and there is silence, something is wrong." —Dr. Lucille Mandin, "French Immersion: How It Works." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*, 2000, p. 76.

## Reading and writing skills

Immersion parents should be encouraged to read to their children in English. Children readily transfer reading skills and strategies from one language to the other. A love of reading will serve a student well in both languages.

By the time formal instruction in reading and writing is introduced, students have a good basic knowledge of French. The teacher continues to use oral expression as the basis for reading activities: by first introducing texts orally (with the help of cues, props and gestures), and by encouraging lots of discussion to ensure a high level of comprehension. Texts are chosen to suit the students' interests and level of comprehension.

Because students need to develop prerequisite reading skills in French, the Grade 1 French immersion teacher may introduce formal French reading instruction more gradually than the English-program teacher. This delay means that immersion students may appear to be slightly behind their English program counterparts in learning to read. Parents often raise concerns at this stage. Consequently, it is very important that they receive clear explanations regarding language and literacy development in immersion and their role in the process (see Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 28–32 and pp. 68–73), and the reassurance that soon their child will be reading in two languages.

Writing correctly in any language not only involves practice in hand-writing but also requires knowledge of grammar and syntax. Knowing oral grammar facilitates and simplifies rule learning because the students will be able to generalize from what they know. Therefore, in immersion the formal study of the written language begins once the students have had sufficient experience in listening, speaking and reading. (See Figure 1, page 4.)

The teacher integrates the teaching of grammatical concepts and writing skills in the context of academic material (social studies, science, mathematics, etc.) to help students use these concepts in meaningful situations.


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**The content subjects—courses taught in French**

Language development, as with reading and writing skills, continues and broadens with the introduction of subject content. Early math and science concepts are very concrete and easily taught with the use of visual aids and hands-on activities. The fine arts, especially music and drama, as well as physical education, provide an abundance of meaningful language learning opportunities.

Teaching techniques and materials are used to encourage teacher-student and student-student interaction. Activity-oriented learning continues throughout all grades to allow for daily use of the language by students, and thus continued oral development. At the secondary level, French language arts teachers and those teaching other subjects in French should plan their lessons together since all are responsible for language development. (See Chapter 5, pages 63–64, 69–70, 72–73.)

> "Being mindful of a good and abundant use of French is especially important for teachers at the secondary level, whether they are teaching social studies, mathematics or French language arts. Too often teachers focus on their subject area alone... We get so focussed on teaching the subject matter that not all of us have a sense of the importance of helping students be users of the French language."
> —Dr. Lucille Mandin, "French Immersion: How It Works." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*, 2000, p. 76.

By the time students are being exposed to more complex concepts, they have developed a good understanding of French and a functional use of the language.

**English language arts**

Once students have developed a good foundation in French, formal instruction of English is introduced (see Chapter 2, pages 26–30). Most immersion students come from English home environments and all are exposed to English in the greater community. Thus, in introducing English Language Arts, the teacher helps students to build on what they already know through their experiences with English and the skills they have gained while learning to read and write in French. For example, because of the number of cognates (up to 40 percent), it is easy for students to make transfers from English to French and vice versa. The teacher helps students to sort out the differences between French and English that can cause confusion during the transition from French to English reading and writing. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 71–72.)

## The Late Immersion Model

Late immersion programs are not as available as early immersion. Late immersion offers a late elementary or early secondary entry to immersion.



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Much of what happens in early immersion is relevant to late immersion, but there are some differences.

While late immersion students may or may not have had previous exposure to French in school (through the FSL program), they enter the program having acquired the concepts in the different subjects in English and have been reading and writing in English throughout the primary grades. They have more complex communication needs than early immersion students, and the academic demands upon them are greater. Therefore, the speed with which late immersion students acquire skills in French is more crucial than in early immersion. Also, since it is usually the student's decision to enrol in late immersion, these programs tend to attract academically strong and highly motivated students; a more homogeneous group than is likely to be found in an early immersion program.

As with early immersion, late immersion begins with an initial period of concentration on French language development. However, once this process begins, it progresses more rapidly than in early immersion. Along with a variety of audio and visual aids, the teacher can also make use of written French materials from the beginning. As with early immersion, the receptive skills develop first. Oral expression tends to precede and accompany reading and writing activities.

Ron May, formerly a principal with the Calgary Board of Education, suggests planning short-term units of study on a thematic basis using an interdisciplinary approach. For example, a concept in Social Studies could be developed through the use of Language Arts teaching strategies, thus offering a more meaningful context for second language learning during the Social Studies class.

Late immersion students very quickly move through the survival level to develop the vocabulary and grammar needed to learn subject matter. From this point, competence in French is developed not only during the French Language Arts period but also in mathematics, social studies, science, and so on. Most students are comfortable with their new language and use it with ease by the end of their first year in a late immersion program.

While late immersion students are expected to cover the same academic material as regular English program students, in the first year or two some of the more complex content in some subject areas may be simplified. These are revisited in later months and years when students' language skills have increased.

Again, teachers of French Language Arts and those teaching the different subject areas in French should plan cooperatively as they all are responsible for French language development. Hands-on activities and opportunities to hear and use French in creative and meaningful ways are an important aspect of learning in all subject areas and throughout all grade levels.

During the first few weeks or even months of late immersion, students can be expected to feel tired and stressed as they learn to cope with the greater demands of late immersion: such as the need to pay close attention at all times, constant searching for the right words to express themselves, extra homework, a new environment, and new classmates. Teachers, students and their parents must expect and be prepared for this stage. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 38–41.)

## Clientele

French immersion is designed for students whose first language and family heritage is other than French.

Early immersion is, with very few exceptions, suitable for any child (see Chapter 9, pages 121–123).

- As with any program, parental support and encouragement are essential.
- Researchers have found that early immersion students with difficulties—learning disabilities, low intelligence, behavioural problems—will do as well academically as they would in a regular English program **provided they receive the same assistance as they would in the English program.** Similarly, gifted students can thrive in an immersion program, if they also receive the benefit of special programming. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 36–37 and Appendix A "French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research.")
- Students from non-English speaking homes also succeed in immersion programs, learning English and French as their second and third, or even third and fourth languages.
- Socio-economic factors should not be a deterrent to choosing a French immersion program (see also Appendix A "Poverty and Immersion Mix").

"Myths and prejudices often block the way of language-impaired children trying to learn a second language, says a University of Alberta linguistics professor....
Johanne Paradis will conduct studies using Edmonton and Montreal children in second language programs in hopes of dispelling some misconceptions....
Paradis's work could have a significant impact on programs in bilingualism and second-language education for children."
—*Edmonton Journal*, April 23, 2002, p. B3.

While there are generally no specific entrance requirements for late immersion, the academic demands of the upper elementary/junior high grades coupled with the initial period of French language acquisition can be challenging for students. Teachers, students, and parents should consider a number of factors in making the choice.

Some of the attributes that benefit the late immersion student are
- a predisposition for language learning, including strong English skills;
- maturity;
- strong study skills and work habits;
- a willingness to take risks and enjoy a challenge;
- tolerance for change and ambiguity; and
- a good sense of humour.

Other factors may include the student's level of involvement in extracurricular activities (i.e. does the student have time for this added challenge?) and career orientation.

Perhaps the most important factors, however, are the student's own motivation to learn French and parental support and encouragement.

### For More Information

Halsall, Nancy D. "Poverty and French Immersion Mix." *Journal de l'immersion Journal* 23, 2 (July 2001), pp. 8–9. (See Appendix A)



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Alberta Learning. *Language Learning in French Immersion Classrooms in the Transition Year: Informa.ion for School Administrators.* Edmonton: Alberta Education. 1992. (Appendix A.)

## Research Findings

Dr. Stephen Krashen, a well-known professor of linguistics at the University of Southern California with experience in neurolinguistics and second language acquisition, claims that:

> "Canadian immersion is not simply another successful language teaching programme—it may be the most successful programme ever recorded in the professional language teaching literature. No programme has been as thoroughly studied and documented, and no programme, to my knowledge, has done as well." — "Immersion: Why it Works and What It Has Taught Us." *Language and Society* 12 (Winter 1984), p. 61.

In 1992 the Canadian Education Association reported that:

> "French immersion is a proven successful Canadian approach to second language learning … No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills, and the academic achievement of French immersion students, have been well documented and research shows that the program works." — "French Immersion Today." *CEA Information Note* (August 1992).

Studies of the various French second language programs clearly show that the more exposure students have to French and the more they use it, the better their communication skills and the greater their confidence in their ability to use the language. In fact, rarely if ever are immersion and core French programs compared any more, as the results are so dramatically different.
—*Yes, You Can Help!* p. 34. (See Appendix A.)

### Overview

Literally hundreds of quantitative and qualitative studies have been carried out over more than 35 years of French immersion in Canada. These studies consistently show the following:

- Students achieve a high level of functional fluency in French by the end of Grade 12 (see page 3).
- After an initial lag lasting until a year or two after English language arts is introduced, early French immersion students perform as well in English as their English-program counterparts. There is some evidence that from late elementary on, early immersion students may out-perform their English-program counterparts in some English skills. This is supported by student results on the Alberta Grade 6 and 9 English Language Arts achievement tests.
- No detrimental effects on students' English language skills have been found in studies of late immersion. In fact, some research tends to suggest that first language skills are enhanced by second language study.
- Immersion students do as well as their English-program counterparts in subject areas. This too is confirmed by student results on the Alberta Grade 6 and 9 English Language Arts achievement tests.


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- Immersion students experience no loss of cultural identity.
- Immersion has not been found to be harmful to intellectual development, nor has it been found to cause social or emotional difficulties. In fact, there is some evidence of enhanced social, psychological and intellectual development among immersion students and a refined ability to recognize, understand and appreciate cultural differences.

While specific issues such as the social-psychological and social-relational effects of immersion and those issues relating to classroom practices and administration of the program call for further scrutiny, over three decades of research have confirmed that the French immersion models as outlined on pages 4–8 meet the stated goals.

### Comparison of Early and Late Immersion Outcomes

Both early and late immersion models have been found to produce graduates with high levels of French language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, generally students who have had the most number of hours in French have the highest achievement. Early immersion students, despite representing a more diverse range of abilities, consistently score higher in speaking ability and listening skills than late immersion students and have been found to have greater confidence in using French. Researchers have also found a positive correlation between the relative second language proficiency of late immersion students and their IQ scores—a finding that does not apply to early immersion students. (See Appendix A: "French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research," pp. 1–2 and *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 41–43.) One recent study of immersion students attending schools in the Calgary Board of Education, conducted by consultant Lise May, found late immersion students' application of grammar skills to be stronger than those of early immersion students.

While little research has been done on the effects of combining classes of early and late immersion students in junior and senior high, researchers caution that the presence of late French immersion students in a combined class may slow the progress of the early immersion students. (See Chapter 5, page 72.)

**For More Information** fmi

Alberta Learning. *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents.* Revised Edition. Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002, pp. 33–44. (See Appendix A.)

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## Myths and Facts

While the success of French immersion has been well documented by research, the program has also been the target of criticism. Much of this criticism has been constructive and has led, and continues to lead, to program improvements.

However, some of criticism stemmed from misconceptions about the immersion program, the results of questionable studies, or the results of valid research taken out of context. Consequently, over the years a number of myths about French immersion have emerged. These myths are encountered by administrators, educators and parents alike and can affect some aspects of program delivery, efforts to promote programs, and student enrolment and attrition.

"Some myths also grew from a natural caution in the early 1970s when immersion was a new program and its long-term impact was unknown. Today a wealth of research is available to debunk the myths that have emerged and guide effective decision-making." —Judy Gibson, Branch Development Officer, Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch.

In 1999, during a system-wide review of its French immersion programs, the Calgary Board of Education French Immersion Task Force identified 10 of the most common myths about French immersion and the facts that dispel them. The following is an excerpt from the Task Force Report.


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## An excerpt from the Final Report of the Calgary Board of Education French Immersion Task Force, June 30, 1999

## Myths and Facts about French Immersion

**INTRODUCTION**

A number of myths and false impressions regarding French Immersion need to be addressed. Over time, they have led to a number of unquestioned practices and beliefs that have left a negative impact on the future health of Immersion education in Calgary. Once the following series of myths is dispelled, the reasons for maintaining a strong French Immersion program in Calgary's public schools become compelling. As a program of choice supported by the CBE, French Immersion must continue to be a first-rate program that parents can choose with full confidence that the resources made available to their children will be equivalent to those made available to children in other programs.

| MYTH | FACT |
|---|---|
| **1. (a) French Immersion is for above-average students only.**<br>There is a belief that acquiring a second language is so difficult that only "better" students will be able to cope with the curriculum in an Immersion program. | "Evaluations of French Immersion students with characteristics that are typically disadvantageous have revealed that such students demonstrate the same levels of first language development and academic achievement as similarly disadvantaged students in all-English schools... Students with below-average levels of academic ability achieved the same levels of proficiency in speaking and listening comprehension in French as average and above average French Immersion students." Fred Genesee, *Learning Through Two Languages: Studies of Immersion and Bilingual Education*, New York (1987) |
| **(b) French Immersion already provides sufficient enrichment for children who need the extra learning challenge.** | It has been shown that gifted students in Early Immersion [and late immersion] require enriched learning opportunities just as they would in the English stream. |
| **(c) French Immersion students do not have special learning needs.**<br>This myth follows the logic of 1 (a). Because the program is thought to be only for bright/gifted students, it is believed that learning assistance need not be provided. | "Researchers have found that immersion students with a variety of difficulties – from learning disabilities to low intelligence and to behavioural problems – will do as well academically as they could be expected to do in an English program, **provided they receive the same assistance as they would if enrolled in the English stream.**" *Yes, You Can Help! A Guide for French Immersion Parents*, Alberta Education (1996). |
| **(d) All learning assistance for children must be in French.** | "...Most learning difficulties are not language specific. Once your child has acquired strategies to overcome them, those strategies will be transferred to the French settings when your child is shown the connections." *Yes, You Can Help! A Guide for French Immersion Parents*, Alberta Education (1996). Although the ideal is for all resources to be in French, learning strategies are transferable. It is acceptable that certain resources are available in English and this situation should not be a reason for leaving a French Immersion program. |




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**2) French Immersion is only for the socio-economically advantaged.**

This was true in the early days of French Immersion (late 60s) when information about this option was spread by word of mouth. In the late 1990s, this observation is no longer valid. As a 1985 study by Holobow, Chartrand and Lambert shows, there are "no statistically significant differences" in test scores of children from varying socio-economic backgrounds. Factors such as distance, fees and what information is distributed about Immersion may, however, contribute to problems of accessibility. These are factors which school boards can address.

**3) French Immersion costs dramatically more than regular English programs.**

[The Calgary Board of Education has found that] start-up costs for Immersion are higher than for regular programs, but the annual costs of running an existing Immersion program are lower... [See Chapter 3, pages 39–45 for information on available funding for a French immersion program.]

**4) Parents have to know French in order to support their children in French Immersion.**

With the current emphasis on parents being more involved in their child's education, this myth creates much anxiety for parents.

Communication of accurate information about language acquisition and curricula is needed to dispel this myth. Knowing that French Immersion is designed specifically for ...students [who have no proficiency in French] is vital. For example, schools [should]... routinely inform parents of curriculum handbooks or *Yes, You Can Help! A Guide for French Immersion Parents*, Alberta Education (1996).

**5) French Immersion kindergarten is too stressful for children.**

In "*A Comparison of Children's Understanding of School in Regular English Language and French Immersion Kindergartens*" (1988), Janette Pelletier shows that Immersion students experience kindergarten no differently than other students. One distinction, however, is that Immersion students see language learning as a good reason for going to school.

**6) Late Immersion produces all the benefits Early Immersion does.**

Former Early Immersion student Erin Gibson illustrates the difference this way: "When all the high school immersion students went to a French play, everyone understood the story and got the message, but the Early Immersion students enjoyed more of the jokes". *Yes, You Can Help! Information And Inspiration for French Immersion Parents*, Alberta Education (1997). It is, however, more than just a question of fluency. Early Immersion students have the ability to acquire third or fourth languages with less difficulty than other children. While current brain research suggests several learning advantages in other subjects for both Early and Late Immersion children, these advantages are more pronounced for Early Immersion children.

**7) French Immersion students are disadvantaged in English.**

"The hundreds of studies that have looked into these students' mathematics, science and social studies achievements all conclude that early total immersion students do as well as their English counterparts... they are able to transfer their knowledge from one language to another." *Yes, You Can Help! A Guide for French Immersion Parents*, Alberta Education (1996). Several studies indicate that Immersion students actually do better in some subject areas than their English counterparts, including English language arts.

**8) Children with auditory processing problems should not remain in French Immersion.**

There is emerging evidence that children with auditory processing problems can achieve success in French Immersion with the right support. "A child transferring to an English program often feels unsuccessful and lacks confidence and self-esteem. He still requires support and resources to assist with the difficulty." Joanne Boissonneault, *Canadian Parents for French (Alberta), Issue No. 58*, Spring 1999.

**9) A French-speaking teacher automatically knows enough about language acquisition to teach French Immersion.**

Someone who knows how to speak French does not necessarily have all the knowledge and expertise needed to teach in a French Immersion program. Specific training in the area of language acquisition is required as well as in-depth knowledge about what special pedagogical needs Immersion children have.

**10) French is no longer an important or relevant language to learn.**

French as a foreign language is the second most frequently taught language in the world after English. It is spoken as an official language in thirty-three countries around the world and is the only language other than English that is spoken on five continents. French, like English, is a truly global language.

It is also a myth that immersion students are "perfectly balanced bilinguals" at the end of Grade 12. There simply is not enough time in a Kindergarten to Grade 12 immersion program to achieve such an ideal. In fact, very few individuals ever achieve truly balanced bilingualism—an equal and high degree of proficiency in two languages—in a lifetime. However, research clearly shows that French immersion students attain very high levels of functional fluency, and that the program is a highly effective approach to second language learning.

## An Historical Overview of French Immersion

French immersion has been called a "phenomenon" and "the great Canadian experiment that worked." It is a modern-day educational innovation that has become a Canadian success story and has gained Canadian researchers, educators and parent groups respect worldwide.

But it is not new! Rather, "immersion" is just another name for a long-accepted practice.

- As far back as 3000 B.C. instruction was often in a language other than that of the home and community, because so few languages were written.
- Bilingual education can be traced back to the second millennium B.C. through the discovery, in modern-day Syria, of bilingual texts engraved on tablets thought to be used for teaching.



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## French Immersion in Canada

**1960s** —French immersion began in Canada in response to parental interest spurred by political, social and economic changes happening in Quebec and throughout Canada. In Quebec, as a result of the Quiet Revolution, French was fast becoming the principal language of work and communication throughout the province, leaving anglophone Quebecers concerned for their futures. In the rest of Canada, socio-economic horizons were broadening—opening new career opportunities and changing attitudes.

The best-known French immersion experiment began in Quebec in 1965. After a two-year struggle to convince their reluctant school board, a group of 12 parents calling themselves the St. Lambert Bilingual School Study Group received permission to start a French immersion Kindergarten program. Their biggest challenge had been to make school board officials understand that children could learn French through immersion without harm to their competence in English. To do so, they had sought the advice and help of linguistics specialists, psychologists and other experts, among them Dr. Wallace Lambert of the Psychology Department, McGill University and the well-known Montreal neurosurgeon, Dr. Wilder Penfield. The involvement and professional advice of these two scholars helped to shape the future of second language education in Canada.

Having won their opportunity, this foresighted group of St. Lambert parents then insisted that their fledgling program be carefully studied. By 1969, McGill University was releasing encouraging research results on the St. Lambert experiment.

In the same year, the report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism led to the passage of the first Official Languages Act. Anglophone parents throughout the country became increasingly concerned for their children's future. They knew from personal experience that the traditional approach to second language instruction in school systems was inadequate to prepare young people for careers and lifestyles that would require competence in a second language. They began to call for improved opportunities in publicly funded school systems for their children to learn Canada's other official language.

Word of the St. Lambert results quickly spread, and soon parent committees across the country were demanding French immersion for their children.

**1970s** —Federal-provincial agreements to transfer money to the provinces and territories for first and second language education in the minority official language (English in Quebec and French elsewhere), the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP), began in 1970.

By 1977, some 45,000 Canadian students were enrolled in French immersion programs and a national support group called Canadian Parents for French was formed. The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*) was also founded in this year.


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**1980-90s** —French immersion enrolments increased by more than 650 percent during the 80s and 90s. By the 1998/99 school year, more than 320,000 students were enrolled in French immersion programs being offered in large cities and small towns from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland/ Labrador to the Territories.

**2002** —Canada has become a world leader in second language teaching. Today, Canadian-style immersion programs can be found in countries around the world including Australia, Finland, Hong Kong, Singapore, Spain, and the United States.

Japan is now looking closely at the immersion approach as a model for teaching English to their elementary school students. "Cold Lake students teach Japanese a lesson: Journalists tour schools to see Alberta model of computer-aided learning in action." *Edmonton Journal*, March 30, 2001, p. A3.

## French Immersion in Alberta

**1890s** —While the earliest schools established in what is now Alberta used both English and French as languages of instruction, by 1892 the Council of Public Instruction of what was then the Northwest Territories abolished the use of French. It later gave permission for French-speaking students to study French grammar, reading, composition and literature for approximately one hour per day.

**1920-1960** —The 1921 *School Act* permitted instruction in French in Grades 1 and 2 with one hour per day at each grade level thereafter, but the Department of Education did not identify learning resources. The teaching of French continued to be offered this way in many of Alberta's francophone communities until 1968. At this time, the *School Act* was amended to increase the use of French as the language of instruction in Alberta schools.

**1940s** —A few private institutions in Edmonton, such as the Jesuit College, *Collège Saint-Jean* and *Académie Assomption*, provided instruction in French for at least part of the day.

**1960-1970s** —Amendments to the *School Act* in 1968 and 1970 permitted boards and private schools to offer instruction in French from Grade 1 to 12.

By 1976, provincial regulations allowed French to be used as the language of instruction for a maximum of 80 percent of the school day from Grade 3 to Grade 12.

In 1978, the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education was established. In the same year, parents established the Alberta Branch of Canadian Parents for French (the national association having been established a year earlier). Enrolment in Alberta's French immersion programs was approximately 7,600 students.

**1980-1990s** —In Alberta, as in other parts of the country, parental interest in immersion programs grew slowly in the late 60s and early 70s, gaining momentum and spreading throughout the province during the 80s and early 90s.

Initially, many francophone parents enrolled their children in these new French immersion programs thinking that it would meet their children's educational needs. However, these parents quickly realized that the program was indeed conceived for children who wanted to learn French as a second language and not for children who had French as a first language. As a result, parents who had rights under s. 23 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* got together and went on to establish French first language schools also known as francophone schools. (See Appendix A *What do I want for my child?*)

By the mid-90s, immersion enrolments had grown to over 28,800 students. A decline was experienced in the second half of the 90s and by 1997-98, enrolments had fallen to just over 26,000. However, the last few years have seen a small but steady increase. In the 2001-2002 school year, 27,715 students were enrolled in Alberta's French immersion programs. (See Chapter 7, pages 93 and 95 and Chapter 8, pages 108–111.)

**2001-2002** —Today, Alberta has 62 school jurisdictions, five of which are Francophone Regional authorities. Of the remaining 57, 41 offer a French immersion program in some 171 schools throughout the province. French immersion is also offered by five private schools.

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# Conditions for Success

During more than 35 years of French immersion in Canada, hundreds of research studies have been conducted and some 2 000 school jurisdictions have gained experience with the program. The results of this extensive research and experience provide today's central office and school level administrators with the knowledge and understanding to plan and deliver high-quality French immersion programs.

This chapter attempts to summarize what has been learned and to present conditions and practices for success.

## French Immersion Delivery Models Found in Alberta

Several variations of the program exist, offering different entry points and amounts of instruction in French. The different Canadian immersion models draw different student populations and are effective for the students who enrol in them. In Alberta, two types of immersion programs are found.

### Early French Immersion

- Begins in Kindergarten or Grade 1 and is intended to continue through Grade 12.
- Offered in some 41 school jurisdictions throughout Alberta, early immersion is by far the most popular delivery model in Alberta and across Canada.
- Early immersion provides the most diverse range of students with the greatest access and the greatest length of exposure to French. There are generally no entry requirements for early immersion programs and it is parents who make the decision to enrol their children, for reasons ranging from increased job opportunities to cultural enrichment. (See Chapter 4, page 54.)
- Research and experience have clearly demonstrated that student proficiency in French is strongly correlated to the amount of time spent learning and using the language (see Chapter 1, pages 10–11 and Appendix A "French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research"). Recognizing that many local factors may determine the time allocated to instruction in the French language, the following percentages of time are



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most commonly accepted as supporting the goals of French immersion programs:

| | |
|---|---|
| Kindergarten | 100% |
| Grades 1–2 | 100 – 90% |
| Grades 3–6 | 80 – 70% |
| Grades 7–9 | 80 – 50% |
| Grades 10–12 | 80 – 40% |

British Columbia was one of the first provinces to introduce late immersion (in the 1970s) and has extensive experience with the program. Current B.C. Ministry of Education policies and procedures recommend that the first year of late immersion be taught totally in French, with 80 percent of instructional time spent in French in the second year. (Note: In BC, students normally enter late immersion in Grade 6.)
[Source: www.bced.gov.ba.ca/policy/96/12.htm]

### Late French Immersion

- Begins in Grade 6 or 7and is intended to continue through Grade 12.
- In the 2001-2002 school year, late immersion was offered in four school jurisdictions in Alberta.
- By its nature, late immersion attracts a smaller student clientele with a more homogeneous range of abilities than early immersion. Enrolment in a late immersion program is usually a decision made by the student, with parental support. Often several factors are considered in making the choice and/or accepting students. (See Chapter 1, page 9.)
- While not essential, two or three years of study in an FSL program prior to entering late immersion are considered advantageous for the late immersion student.
- For optimum language development, from 90–100 percent of class time should be spent in French in the first few months. In the months and years to follow, recommended instructional time in French is the same for late immersion as for the early immersion program at the same grade levels.

## The School Setting

b

The success of an immersion program requires a school environment that recognizes and values the learning of French and incorporates the use of French as a living language. This can happen effectively in either of the school settings described below through the collaboration of all school personnel and policies and practices that reflect an understanding of and commitment to the needs of the program or programs offered in the school. (See Chapter 5, pages 61–64 and 74.)

### The Dual-track or Multi-track School

- A dual-track school houses both a French immersion program and an English program.
- The dual track school is the most common school setting for immersion programs in Alberta and across Canada, at the elementary, junior and senior high levels.
- A multi-track school houses more than two programs, for example, an English program, an early French immersion program and a late French immersion program or another second language program such as a Ukrainian bilingual program.

- Administration in these settings requires attention to the needs and goals of two or more programs, groups of teachers, parents and student populations.

> "This type of school setting provides an excellent opportunity to communicate Canadian values and to put into practice the dynamics found in an officially bilingual and culturally diverse country." —Raymond Lamoureux, "Addressing Program Needs in Dual Track Schools," Fall 1995. (See Chapter 5, pages 75–78, for the full text.)

### The Immersion Centre or Single-track School

- The immersion centre or single-track school is one in which only French immersion is housed, in any combination of grade levels.
- Administration in this setting can focus exclusively on the immersion program, teachers and students.

> "[In an immersion centre] by widening the linguistic focus from the classroom to the rest of the school, we have given the children a more natural setting for really communicating in French." —Spencer Stanutz, "A Progress Report From the Principal." *More French S'il Vous Plaît*, 1985, p 34.

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## Programming

c

A successful French immersion program reflects current research and the best practices in both the fields of education and French immersion, from its entry point through Grade 12, including

- curriculum documents that support effective French second language learning;
- implementation guides and support materials developed or adapted for immersion programs (see Chapter 12, pages 151–152);
- ongoing development of all French language skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing—throughout all grade levels;
- development of French language skills across all subject areas;
- written expectations for the development of French language skills at each grade level;
- lists of authentic multi-media resources appropriate to the age, interests and language skills of students;
- the availability of authentic French linguistic and cultural experiences;
- a wide range of courses in French, both core and complementary;
- continuous evaluation of student achievement and progress;
- continuous monitoring and evaluation of the program.

## Leadership

d

A successful French immersion program requires national, provincial, jurisdictional and school leaders who:

- value French second language learning as an integral part of a world-class education,
- believe in French immersion as an effective means of learning French as a second language,
- acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to offer, support and maintain a high-quality program, and
- advocate for the program, its accessibility and sustainability.

## Teaching

e

In addition to addressing the goals of the regular English program, teaching in a French immersion program requires attention to the initial and continuous development of the students' ability to communicate fluently in French, and to the development of the students' understanding and appreciation of the culture, common attitudes, and values of French-speaking communities in Alberta, Canada and around the world.

Teaching strategies in all grades should be based on the latest immersion pedagogy, including

- the use of task-based, authentic activities that are meaningful, contextualized, and involve the real transfer of information;
- the development of all language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing;

- the integration of language and content, where all teachers in a French immersion program share the responsibility for the students' overall French language development;
- the integration of grammar with writing and content;
- the integration of culture and content;
- the identification of errors and a variety of appropriate approaches to and strategies for error correction;
- opportunities for and the encouragement of spontaneous and frequent use of the language by students through teacher-student and student-student interaction;
- the use of authentic multi-media resources;
- opportunities for interaction with native French speakers;
- the use of the French language in meaningful situations, both in and outside the classroom and school; and
- continual evaluation of the students' language development and continuous adaptation to ensure appropriate language development.

As well as being qualified to teach at the appropriate grade level(s) and subject area(s), ideally French immersion teachers should also have
- native or native-like fluency in both oral and written French;
- training in and a good understanding of immersion methodology (pre-service and/or in-service);
- a personal understanding of French culture; and
- the ability to communicate in English orally and in writing for non-instructional purposes.

A 1992 survey of 2000 teachers in more than 650 schools across Canada, conducted for the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/ *l'Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/ *ACPI*) identified the following areas of need for teachers' professional development, in order of priority:
- teaching French language arts in immersion;
- developing/adapting curriculum and resources;
- teaching subject matter in immersion;
- varying teaching strategies;
- meeting individual student needs;
- motivating students in immersion;
- integrating subject matter;
- evaluation;
- second language acquisition in children;
- methodology of second language teaching in immersion;
- research information on immersion;
- learning assistance;
- child development;
- teaching the cultures of francophone communities;
- communicating with parents;
- classroom management;
- first language acquisition in children; and
- teaching multi-level classes.

(Source: *Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes* 52, 2, (January 1996), p. 261.)

## Professional Development

Administrators and teachers must remain abreast of research, issues and innovations related to their respective roles and responsibilities for the French immersion program.

Central office and school administrators require
- an understanding of second language learning and the nature and goals of French immersion programs;
- an understanding and appreciation of immersion methodology;
- knowledge and insights regarding administrative issues specific to French immersion programs;
- access to current research and developments in immersion methodology; and
- opportunities to network and engage in problem-solving with their colleagues, both within and outside the school jurisdiction.



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French immersion teachers require

- opportunities, which may include release time, to meet, network, plan activities and develop ideas with colleagues, both within and outside their programs, schools and jurisdictions;
- opportunities to attend workshops and conferences on French immersion-related topics, many of which may best be given in French;
- access to current research and developments in teaching practices;
- opportunities to maintain and improve their French language skills and cultural awareness; and
- in-service opportunities suited to their specific needs as immersion teachers (see Chapter 5, page 71.)

## Resources

g

Planning and budgeting at all levels must provide for

- adequate, authentic and age-appropriate French resources from the entry grade through Grade 12 that support the learning outcomes of the different courses as well as general classroom instruction and activities;
- the establishment of high-quality French language, multi-media library collections;
- authentic French language experiences.

See also Chapter 12.

## Support Services

h

The success of a French immersion program requires that jurisdictions and schools provide adequate support services from the program entry grade through Grade 12, including

- central office staff who provide direction and support to school-based administrators and teachers;
- a pool of French-speaking substitute teachers qualified to teach immersion;
- French-speaking teacher assistants;
- access to appropriate testing and diagnostic services for French immersion students experiencing learning difficulties;
- access to appropriate resource programs, learning assistance, and gifted programs for French immersion students; and
- guidance counsellors able to meet the needs of French immersion students.

## English Instruction in an Early French Immersion Program

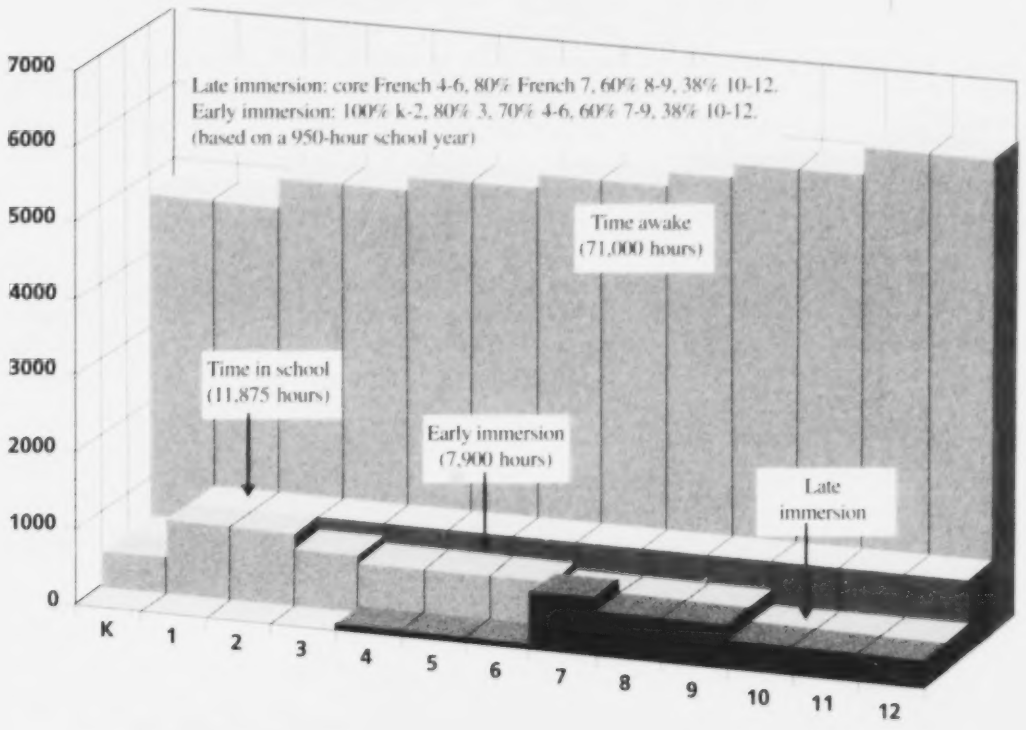
i

As well as gaining functional fluency in French, immersion students must acquire English language skills equivalent to those of their English-program peers. This is one of the biggest concerns of many immersion parents and parents considering immersion for their young children. After all, there would

be little value in children learning a second language, if their first language skills were to suffer.

An examination of the research and an understanding of the typical immersion student's milieu indicate no cause for concern.

- Quantitative and qualitative research findings into the English skills of immersion students are clear and consistent. Early immersion students experience an initial lag in the development of their English skills, lasting until a year or two after beginning English language arts, but are on par with their English program peers by Grade 5 or 6. Many studies have found that in later grades immersion students often out-perform their English program counterparts in some English skill areas (e.g. the figurative and metaphoric use of language).
- The performance of French immersion students as a group is consistently strong over time on the Grades 3, 6 and 9 Alberta English Language Arts Achievement Tests and on Grade 12 Diploma Exams.
- Most immersion students arrive at school having learned English at home as their first language.
- Typical Alberta immersion students who attend the early French immersion program from Kindergarten through Grade 12 spend only about 11 percent of their waking hours immersed in the French language in the classroom. The rest of the time is spent surrounded by English, providing ample opportunity for the development of English skills.




Source: Alberta Learning. *Yes, You Can Help!* Revised Edition. 2002, p. 48.

> The effect of learning a second language (e.g. French) on first language skills has been virtually positive in all studies. Although most studies on the effect of second language learning on first language literacy have been done in the area of French immersion education, one can also apply the findings to Core French and intensive French programmes.
>
> The loss of instructional time in English in favour of the second language has never been shown to have negative effects on the achievement of the first language.... One can confidently assume that cognitive abilities acquired in the learning of one language can be put to use in the acquisition and proficiency of the other language. In many studies first language skills were shown to be enhanced, even if instruction time in L1 was reduced in favour of L2 instruction.
> —Monique Bournot-Trites and Ulrike Tallowitz, *Report of Current Research on the Effect of the Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills*, 2002, p. 3.

When discussing the results of English Language Arts Achievement Tests for French immersion students, Jim Brackenbury of Alberta Learning's Learner Assessment Branch explains that over time "[according to the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Tests the] French immersion students do just fine. They are obviously not suffering any damage in English Language Arts by being in a French immersion program." ("Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams: Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*, p. 151.) He goes on to say that

> ...the gap between the English results and the French immersion results [on English Language Arts achievement tests] gets wider from Grade 3 to 9. So in Grade 9 we have as close to 100% of [immersion] students as you are going to get, meeting acceptable standards and a marked gap at the standard of excellence, well above the 15% requirement. (loc. cit.)

## When Should English Language Arts be Introduced?

While the early immersion model is based on an initial intense exposure to French (see Chapter 1, page 5–7), researchers have not yet provided a definitive answer on the optimum time to introduce English.

Over the past three decades, several variations on the early French immersion model have been tried, from the "bilingual" or "partial immersion" approach, in which as much as half the time is spent in English and half in French, to "total immersion," in which all of the time for the first few years is spent in French.

"...in the past, some parents have opted for a partial immersion program rather than total immersion program because of fears regarding their child's English development. These fears appear to have little basis. The greater exposure to French in early total immersion has no detrimental effect on children's achievement in English." — James Cummins, *Research Findings from French Immersion Programs Across Canada: A Parent's Guide. A CPF Special Report*, n.d.

We also know from extensive research that late immersion students do not experience any lags in or detriment to English skills at any point in the late immersion program. (See Appendix A "French Immersion: the Success Story Told by Research," p. 2.)

Today, early total immersion is by far the most common approach used across the country because of student success in attaining high levels of French achievement. In the typical early total immersion program English is introduced in Grade 3 (although variations include Grades 2 and 4).

However, lingering parental concerns regarding English development, particularly reading skills, have prompted some boards to offer a version of "partial immersion", introducing English either informally (speaking and listening skills) or formally (with a focus on reading and writing) for between 30 and 60 minutes per day in Grade 1.

"French immersion students are not disadvantaged in English in the medium to long term. Moreover, results from many studies ... also show that early total French immersion students' French skills are better than those of students who receive less intensive instruction in French. There is thus a strong case for intensive French immersion in the early grades, with English instruction introduced gradually from Grade 2 or 3 onward."
—M. Turnbull, S. Lapkin, and D. Hart, "Grade 3 Immersion Students' Performance in Literacy and Mathematics: Province-wide Results from Ontario (1998-99)," 2001, p. 24.

In brief, we know from extensive research studies that:

- early immersion students consistently perform as well as their English-program peers in all skill areas by the end of elementary school, **no matter when English language arts is introduced**, and that they continue to do so throughout high school;
- immersion students who learn to read in French first, and remain in French immersion, experience no long-term detrimental effect on English reading skills; and
- students readily transfer reading skills from one language to another.

There is no conclusive research yet to indicate whether:

- learning to read in English first or concurrently with learning to read in French has any advantages or disadvantages, or
- a threshold of instructional time in French is necessary to achieve measurable progress in French.

In the article "When Should English Language Arts be Introduced in the Early French Immersion Program" (see Appendix B), the authors conclude:

> More empirical studies are needed; however, the existing research literature points to the conclusion that no one approach will best meet the needs of each individual student.

They go on to advise:

> Importantly, in the decision-making process, the creation of the immersion environment cannot be overlooked for its contribution to motivating young students to communicate in French, which is the primary goal of the immersion program. Therefore, the number of hours of instruction in French and

the amount of English impinging on the program need to be weighed very carefully.

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*When Should English Language Arts be Introduced in the Early French Immersion Program.* Nepean: Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion (CAIT/*ACPI*), n.d. (See Appendix B.)

### Who Teaches the English Portion of Time?

In his book *Learning Through Two Languages*, Fred Genessee considers "the use of monolingual language models" to be a distinctive and recommended feature of early immersion programs in Canada. By this he means the French teacher speaks only French with the students, leaving instruction in English language arts and other subjects taught in English to English-speaking teachers. This is important, he advises, to encourage the use of French among immersion students, whose tendency would otherwise be to use English.

This approach to language modelling is not found consistently in immersion programs across the country. However, effective language modelling by teachers with native-like fluency in the language of instruction (be it the French or English portion of classroom time) is an important aspect of the immersion approach, given the emphasis on second language learning and the importance of full development of English language skills.

Teachers who instruct immersion students in English language arts and other subjects in English require:

- a native or native-like command of both spoken and written English;
- an understanding of the language learning process, including how students make transferences between languages and what aspects of one language may interfere with or support the acquisition of the other; and
- an understanding of how to maximize the complementary aspects of English and French instruction.

## For More Information

Alberta Learning. *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents.* Revised Edition. Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002, pp. 68–78. (See Appendix A.)

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## The Role of Kindergarten in an Early French Immersion Program

Although enrolment in Kindergarten is optional in Alberta, most children begin school in Kindergarten and most immersion programs begin there.

A French immersion Kindergarten program has the same general goals as an English Kindergarten program—the balanced development of multiple dimensions, such as the cultural, intellectual, emotional, physical, social and aesthetic—with the added goal of introducing children to the French language in a "gentle" or natural way.

This introduction to French is an important step in the process of developing a threshold of language comprehension sufficient for the immersion student to learn to read in French, and to learn subject content.

The characteristics of an effective French immersion kindergarten classroom:

- a bright and colourful room with French words supported by pictures and objects covering the walls
- shelves containing assorted French books, videos, music and games
- the teacher speaking French all of the time (except if the students' security is at risk) and using gestures, mime, intonation, pictures, and objects to convey meaning
- the teacher encouraging students to try French through the use of regular activities (such as the daily calendar), rhyme and songs
- an emphasis on listening skills to stimulate language acquisition
- students speaking English to the teacher and among themselves, gradually trying French sounds and soon interspersing their English with French words
- the incorporation of French culture through authentic activities and materials, visits from Francophones and field trips
- parents involved in such activities as helping with snacks, preparing materials and displays, supervising games, assisting with field trips, helping children with their clothing, and organizing the classroom library—parents are encouraged to learn French songs and vocabulary along with their child



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Parents are often concerned about their roles as immersion parents and their ability to support their children or be involved in the kindergarten classroom if they speak little or no French. They are often also concerned about how their children will cope with the all-French classroom environment. They require reassurance, information and opportunities to see for themselves that there is no cause for concern.

Alberta Learning has two publications for immersion parents:

- *French Immersion Kindergarten: A Handbook for Parents* (see Chapter 6, page 90 for ordering information)
- *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for Immersion Parents,* (see Appendix A, and Chapter 6, page 91 for ordering information)

## French Immersion at the Secondary Level

While to the unilingual observer French immersion students may appear quite proficient in French by the end of Grade 6 or 9, continuing French immersion through Grade 12 is essential if they are to achieve the goals of the French immersion program. (See Chapter 1, page 3.)

The aim of French immersion at the secondary level is to nurture the compound development of the students' second language competency in keeping with their intellectual and social maturity and their growing knowledge base. A French immersion program at the secondary level should offer:

- At least 50 percent instructional time in French (see sidebar, page 10).
- In a semestered environment, some courses taught in French in each semester, so that students are exposed to and use French continually.
- In addition to French Language arts, a variety of language-rich courses taught in French, (such as social studies, the sciences, Career and Life Management, career and technology studies, drama, physical education).
- A good supply of age-appropriate, subject-oriented reference materials in a variety of media, as well as suitable materials for leisure reading.

(See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 82–87.)

Secondary schools should also be promoting and assisting students to explore opportunities for study in French beyond Grade 12 (see Chapter 5, page 73, and Chapter 10).

## The Importance of Culture in the French Immersion Program

While the amount of exposure to French is important for students' second language development, it is equally important that the exposure be relevant, authentic and varied. Language does not stand alone but is integral to the way of life of those who speak it: their behaviours, beliefs, history, geography, and artifacts. Ensuring adequate exposure to culture in a French immersion program includes

- exposing students to French through a variety of domains and through a variety of language experiences, including music, art and literature;
- exposing students to a variety of native French speakers, both in and outside the classroom, through such means as classroom guests (e.g. artists and practitioners and professionals from a variety of fields) videos, field trips and exchanges;
- using resources and materials that reflect authentic, modern francophone life; and
- encouraging students to explore on their own outside school through such means as watching French TV, listening to French radio, reading in French, listening to French music, attending French theatre or francophone community festivals—for example, the annual *Cabane à sucre* (sugaring-off festival), travel, pen or e-mail pals.

## For More Information

Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 119–133, offers a list of French opportunities and resources useful to both teachers and parents.

*L'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta* is another source of information about French cultural activities and resource people (see Chapter 11, page 147 for contact information).

And on the Internet:

- Canadian Parents for French <www.cpfalta.ab.ca> offers a variety of resources and links to more information. Clicking on Activities and Resources for Students, Exchanges and Excursions and Resources for Parents.

- Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages <www.ocol-clo.gc.ca> offers information and publications on official languages.

- Canadian Heritage <pch.gc.ca> is another good source of information and links.

- TELUS Learning Connection <www.2learn.ca> offers a rich collection of authentic documents and teaching strategies that could be used to enhance the teaching of culture in the French Immersion program. See <www.2learn.ca/mapset/new2net/2LearnTour/2LearnTourOverview.html>

The TELUS Learning Connection (TLC) is a unique, innovative, and extremely successful educational alliance of Alberta Learning, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents, and the TELUS Corporation. The Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta is soon to become a member of this Alliance. For, by and with teachers, the TLC involves all Alberta teachers with ongoing opportunities for professional development. TLC has more than 265 Teacher-Leaders, representing school jurisdictions from around the province of Alberta, and a Provincial Core Team of three seconded teachers. TLC Teacher-Leaders are funded to provide inservice to colleagues in their jurisdictions to support the effective use of information and communication technology within the curriculum.

For more information on TLC, please look at <www.2Learn.ca/>. Access 2Learn.ca French resources directly at <www.2learn.ca/toile2/2LearnFran.html>.



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## Language Instruction Across the Disciplines

Not only do the various disciplines and specialty areas—such as social studies, the sciences, music, art, drama and physical education—taught in French add a cultural component to students' language experience, they add an important dimension to the second language learners' language acquisition by:

- balancing the students' constant exposure to English during home and community life, with similar French content;
- providing real-life contexts through which students can acquire vocabulary and language structures, learn idioms and understand body language, and explore abstract concepts in a more comfortable and effortless way than through regular classroom instruction;
- providing students with language skills to discuss with native speakers topics beyond the scope of course content;
- providing students with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the French language across the disciplines, enabling them to transform concepts taught in one discipline into appropriate metaphors in another discipline. For example, by studying physical education and biology in French, students can use the concept of the human body and apply it metaphorically in every day situations: the leg of a chair (*la patte d'une chaise*) letterhead (*l'entête d'une page*), "I still haven't accepted that!" («*Je n'ai toujours pas digéré cela*!»).

In describing the language benefits of an interactive science program for French immersion students, Bernard Laplante of the Department of Curriculum Studies in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan says

> They [students] are contextualized in the "here and now"; students are actually working with concrete materials. Because of this, they can more easily comprehend meanings and negotiate these with the teacher or with other students if necessary. During these activities, students are making observations, descriptions, and predictions using meaningful vocabulary. They are elaborating explanations, arguing about data, interpretations and presenting conclusions. In the course of a single lesson, they are using a number of language functions. They are using the language in meaningful oral or written situations. Students are developing their competence in French as well as developing the many dimensions of scientific literacy. —"The Idea Is to Get Children to DO Science," 1990, pp. 4 and 6.

## Stability

French immersion programs operate most effectively when they are stable from year to year. This requires a commitment on the part of the school board and administration to long-range plans that include

- optimal use of all available funding (see Chapter 3, pages 39–45),

- established entry points and continuation of the program through all grade levels,
- sites that provide optimal access for potential clientele and adequate space to allow for the addition of grade levels and growth in enrolment,
- effective communication with parents to ensure adequate and stable enrolment, and
- effective communication with the community-at-large to ensure recruitment of new students (see Chapter 4, pages 50–52).

## Post-secondary Opportunities

Opportunities for further study and use of French after Grade 12 are important to high school graduates continuing second language development. Just as our first language skills continue to expand and develop throughout our lives, so too is second language development a lifelong process. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 82–87.)

In light of this, the existence and knowledge of opportunities for further study in French at the post-secondary level—whether in universities, colleges, technical institutions and/or non-credit continuing education courses—are an added incentive to the continued study of French through high school. (See Chapter 10.)

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# 3 Providing Provincial Leadership for French Immersion

## A Language Education Policy for Alberta

a

Students in French immersion programs are expected to learn the same knowledge, skills and attitudes as those students who choose to study in regular English language programs. In addition, graduates of French immersion programs will have had the opportunity to achieve a high level of proficiency in a second language. The Government of Alberta encourages and supports the establishment and maintenance of French immersion programs as alternative programs that are excellent vehicles for realizing more of a student's potential.

To confirm its commitment to the French immersion program and to support the program's establishment and maintenance, Alberta Learning has established a framework of policy, regulations, programs and guides, as described in the next section following.

Alberta's current language education policy was adopted in 1988 in response to the enacting of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The *Language Education Policy for Alberta* (available from the Learning Resources Centre, product number 158966) addresses language learning in a way that recognizes the fact that English is the dominant language in Alberta, that Alberta is a province within a country with two official languages, and that there is a need to recognize and support programs that will enable Albertans to learn a variety of other languages. Within this context, Alberta Learning continues to pledge to

- ensure that all Alberta students have the opportunity to achieve a high level of proficiency in the English language,
- develop and provide programs for Albertans who have the right under s. 23 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to have their children educated in French,
- provide opportunities for English-speaking students to learn French,
- provide opportunities for students to learn a range of languages in addition to English and French, and
- provide opportunities for all students whose first language is not English and who require assistance in learning the language to learn English.



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## Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual

Alberta Learning keeps an updated Policy Manual entitled "Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual" on its Web site at <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/pol-plan/polregs/toc.asp>

This Manual is a resource for school boards, schools, school councils, private schools and ECS private operators.

Of particular interest to French immersion administrators is the section relating to second languages. Policy 1.5.2 (French as a Second Language and French Language Immersion) provides the background, policy, the statute (*School Act*), additional definitions, procedures and references specifically relating to the French immersion program.

## Guide to Education—ECS to Grade 12

The *Guide to Education* is available from the Learning Resources Centre, product number 445537, or on Alberta Learning's Web site at <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/default.asp>.

The *Guide to Education* is published for the use of administrators, counsellors and teachers. The *Guide*

- identifies program requirements specified by Alberta Learning and provides the foundations upon which these requirements are based;
- provides information about Kindergarten to Grade 12 programs, education delivery and achievement standards for students; and
- contains information useful in organizing and operating schools to meet the needs of students.

The following sections of the *Guide* deal with French immersion programs:

- Program Planning
  - Early Childhood Services (ECS) to Grade 9 Programming
  - Senior High School Programming
  - Courses and Programs
- Program Administration
  - Student Achievement: ECS to Grade 9
  - Student Placement and Promotion
  - Student Achievement in Senior High School Subjects
  - Awarding Course Credits
- Resources and Services
  - Learning Resources
  - Basic Learning Division
- Appendix 1
  - Provincially Authorized Senior High School Courses, Course Codes and Course Names
- Appendix 3
  - Exceptions


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### Program of Study—Kindergarten

Kindergarten, as part of the Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs, is intended for children in the year prior to entry into Grade 1. As in regular Kindergarten programs, children in French immersion programs learn the foundations that will enable them to succeed in Grade 1 and beyond. The French immersion Kindergarten is the child's first step in acquiring another language and gaining an appreciation of its culture. It emphasizes French language acquisition to prepare them for more structured learning in the elementary grades (see Chapter 2, pages 31–32). The program offered is planned, implemented and evaluated on the basis of the Program of Study: *Français langue seconde: Programme d'éducation de maternelle – Immersion* (Learning Resources Centre product number 406216).

Another invaluable document for administrators of a French immersion Kindergarten program is the curriculum handbook for parents, *French Immersion Kindergarten: A Handbook for Parents* (Learning Resources Centre product number 434902).

### Programs of Study—Grades 1 to 12

The following Programs of Study are prescribed by order of the responsible minister pursuant to s. 39 of the *School Act.*

- *Programmes d'études – Élémentaire* (Learning Resources Centre product number 284399)
- *Programmes d'études – Secondaire 1er cycle* (Learning Resources Centre product number 284381)
- For Grades 10–12 Programs of Study, see individual subject areas on the Alberta Learning Web site at <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/french/programs.asp>

Alberta Learning develops programs of study and support documents in French for French immersion teachers (see Chapter 12, page 151).

**Note:** Documents can be ordered from the Learning Resources Centre following the directions outlined on its Web site <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca>.

## Funding for the French Immersion Program

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As it does for all educational programs offered in Alberta's publicly funded school system, Alberta Learning assumes responsibility for most of the funding provided to school jurisdictions that offer a French immersion program. A description of how these funds are allocated is provided in the *Funding Manual for School Authorities*, prepared to assist school jurisdictions, charter schools, private Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators, and private schools in obtaining education funding from the province of Alberta. The manual is available at the following Web site address: <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/funding/FundingManual/>.



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Administrators of French immersion programs should know and clearly understand the "General Conditions That Apply to Funding" listed in the introduction to the manual. These conditions have broad applications and are used by Alberta Learning in determining the amount of funding and the system of payment. The manual is organized into the following parts:

- **Part 1:** Applies only to school jurisdictions. The first section, "Framework for Funding School Boards," provides an overview of the funding plan for school jurisdictions announced on February 1, 1995. The sections entitled "Instruction Block," "Support Block," and "Capital Block" outline the various types of funding that are available to school jurisdictions offering any program according to the parameters set out in the *Guide to Education*. Also contains policies related to transportation funding (see sidebar).
- **Part 2:** Outlines the funding that is available to school jurisdictions, private Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators, and funded private schools that provide Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs to children.
- **Part 3:** Applies only to funded private schools accredited by the responsible minister. These schools may be eligible to receive funding for basic instruction, students with severe disabilities, resident students of the government, home education, learning resources, and early literacy programs.
- **Part 4:** Outlines the federal funding that is available to school jurisdictions, private Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators, and funded private schools that provide **French language programs** to students. This funding, provided under the **Official Languages in Education Program**, is a per pupil allocation to contribute toward the additional costs involved in providing French language programs. (See next section.)
- **Part 5:** Outlines the funding available to charter schools approved by the responsible minister.
- **Part 6:** Outlines specific types of funding available to all school authorities. These include the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI), Teacher Salary Enhancement, and Supernet access.
- **Part 7:** Outlines specific types of inter-ministry funding available for school authorities. These include Student Health funding and Debt Retirement.
- **Part 8:** Describes the payment schedule and funding rates used by Alberta Learning to allocate funding to each type of school authority. Payment schedules and funding rates are provided for school jurisdictions, private Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators, and funded private schools.

**Transportation Funding**

Funding is provided for transporting students who want to attend an alternative program such as French immersion that is not housed at the neighbourhood school. (See *Funding Manual for School Authorities*, s.1.21 Urban Transportation Funding.)

## Additional Funding from Federal Sources

In addition to the funding described in Part 4 of the Funding Manual for School Authorities, programs for French immersion jurisdictions, teachers and students are also available under the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP).

## Professional Staff: Individual Teacher Bursary Program

The Individual Teacher Bursary Program is a bursary for professional training available to French language educators. Funding is available for courses offered in French in Canada and in Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, as well as for conferences and workshops offered in French within Canada. This program is funded by the federal department of Canadian Heritage and administered by Alberta Learning.

To be eligible for a bursary, an applicant must:
- be a Canadian citizen or a landed immigrant,
- be a resident of Alberta, and
- hold a valid Alberta teaching certificate.

And must also be one of the following:
- a core French (FSL) teacher;
- a teacher (Kindergarten to Grade 12) teaching in an Alternative French Program (immersion, bilingual, etc.) or a francophone program;
- a post-secondary teacher teaching courses in French or teaching a French language course;
- a teacher hired as a French teacher or to teach French in the coming school year;
- an administrator, librarian, counselor, or other professional working directly with students who are learning in the French language in an Alternative French program (immersion, bilingual, etc.) or francophone school (see sidebar on page 58); or
- a French program consultant working directly with French program teachers.

Bursaries are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

The maximum bursary amount per person for one year is $1,700 (2001–2002 school year). Bursary awards paid directly to an individual are taxable. The recipient must keep track of all expenses incurred should they wish to submit these against the bursary, when preparing to file an annual income tax return.

Accommodation, meals and personal expenses are not reimbursed.

Information and application forms are available on the website: <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/French/lang_officielles/offic_en/bursary/bursary.html>.

**Implications for the School Administrator:** Information with regard to the Individual Teacher Bursary Program is sent to all schools offering a French immersion program. Principals are encouraged to share this information with all staff members working directly with students in their French immersion program and encourage these staff members to apply for these funds for their own individual and professional development.



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Per pupil funding for French immersion programs, provided under the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP), is outlined in Part 4 of the *Funding Manual for School Authorities*. This funding is administered through Alberta Learning.

## Program Development for School Jurisdictions

Federal financial assistance is available to school boards, institutions and organizations to defray up to 50 percent of the additional costs involved in expanding, extending and developing French language programs.

Support for approved projects will cover costs to a maximum of 50 percent of the budget for the project.

Generally, projects receive approval for one fiscal year. However, where initiatives span more than one year, applicants are encouraged to identify their longer term funding requirements to ensure that these can be considered in the coming years under the Canada-Alberta agreement for the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP).

Four priorities serve as the key criteria in determining eligibility for funding:

1) Program Start-up Costs
   Costs of offering a French immersion program for the first time in a jurisdiction.

2) Program Extension Costs
   Costs incurred in extending a program from Kindergarten to the primary grade level, from the primary grade level to the upper elementary level, from the upper elementary level to the junior high level, or from the junior high level to the senior high level. Special consideration will be given for the extension of the program to the senior high level.

3) Program Expansion Costs
   Costs arising from offering more courses in French or offering the program in more schools. Special consideration will be given to initiatives to increase the number of courses offered in French at the senior high school level.

4) Joint Jurisdictional Proposals
   Two or more school jurisdictions cooperating to improve access to, or quality of, French immersion programming. Special consideration will be given to initiatives to increase the number of courses offered in French at the senior high level.

Information regarding the program is available from the French Language Services Branch, Alberta Learning, 9th Fl, Devonian Building, 11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 0L2, phone (780) 427-2940 (toll free 310-0000), or send an e-mail to <LSB@learning.gov.ab.ca>. As of May 2003, refer to <www.learning.gov.ab.ca> for new street address. Some information is also available at <www.learning.gov.ab.ca>.

**Implications for the School Administrator:** Information with regard to funding for program development is sent to all school jurisdictions. Principals are encouraged to work with central office staff to request funding for school-based or system-wide initiatives.

In preparing a funding proposal for Alberta Learning, the following guidelines apply:

- Requests for the funding of ongoing costs and the maintenance of established programs will not be considered.
- Expenditures related to capital costs (construction, renovations, physical alteration of facilities) and the purchase of basic learning resources through the Learning Resources Centre Buyer's Guide are not eligible for funding.
- Proposals should reflect full use of both federal and provincial funds available from the province for students enrolled in the French language program.
- Approvals will be based on demonstrated program need and financial need.

Financial need will be determined by comparing the total projected program revenue for the project year with the total projected program expenditure for the year. The school jurisdiction's accumulated operational and non-designated surplus will also serve as an indicator of financial need.

## Students: Summer Language Bursary Program

Established in 1971, the Summer Language Bursary Program (SLBP) offers students who have completed Grade 11 or who are at the post-secondary level the opportunity to live an extraordinary linguistic and cultural experience. The program helps them to improve their knowledge of one of Canada's two official languages and, at the same time, acquire a deeper appreciation for the culture embedded in the language.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) administers this program in collaboration with the provinces and territories. The department of Canadian Heritage funds the program through the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP).

To be eligible for a bursary, an applicant must:

- be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident (students studying in Canada on student visas are not eligible),
- have completed at least Grade 11 or be at the postsecondary level by the time the course begins, and
- have been a full-time student for at least one semester during the current school year.

The SLBP is an intensive language-learning experience. The bursary covers tuition, meals, accommodation and instructional materials.

Provinces and territories award bursaries by random selection based on provincial and territorial allotments and institutional quotas. Priority is given to those who have not previously received a bursary through the Summer Language Bursary Program (SLBP).

Information and application forms are available on the Web site: <www.cmec.ca/olp/>.

**Alberta-Quebec Exchanges for Students**

Alberta Learning, in partnership with the province of Quebec, sponsors a French language development exchange program for high school students. In September, Alberta students host exchange partners from Quebec who spend three months here attending high school classes in English and living in the homes of their Alberta partners. In February, Alberta students travel to Quebec for a similar three-month experience in French. While the focus is on developing language skills, being immersed in a culture and lifestyle different to the one they are used to also develops participants' coping and interpersonal skills.

Any Alberta student who has the equivalent of French 20 may apply for this program. It is an excellent opportunity for French immersion high school students to enhance their level of fluency. For more information, contact Learning Network at 492-0234 (Edmonton) or 1-888-945-5500 (Alberta), or visit <www.learning-network.org>.

**Implications for the School Administrator:** Administrators are encouraged to share this information with their secondary students as soon as it is distributed to schools. As well, this program may be used to enhance a French immersion program where numbers do not permit the range of courses offered in larger urban schools.

### Post-secondary Students: Official Language Monitor Program

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) administers this program in collaboration with the provinces and territories. The Department of Canadian Heritage funds the program through the Official Languages in Education Program (OLEP).

In collaboration with and under the supervision of classroom teachers, monitors help students learn French as a second language in schools in Alberta or help francophone students in schools in Quebec and New Brunswick learn English as a second language.

- Monitors may work part time, usually outside their province or territory of permanent residence, while they continue their post-secondary studies. They earn $4,000 and may receive certain allowances for eight hours of work per week for eight months.
- Monitors may work full time in another province. They earn $12,500 and receive certain allowances for 25 hours of work per week for nine months.

Applicants must:

- have French as their first language and be proficient in oral and written English to work in Alberta, or have English as their first language and be proficient in oral and written French to work in Quebec or New Brunswick;
- be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident (those studying in Canada on student visas are not eligible); and
- have completed at least one year of post-secondary studies or, in Quebec, have at least a *Diplôme d'études collégiales*.

To be a part-time monitor, the applicant must be a full-time student at a post-secondary institution, usually in a province other than their province or territory of permanent residence.

To be a full-time monitor, the applicant must have been registered as a full-time student for at least one semester within the last five years.

Information and application forms are available on the Web site <www.cmec.ca/olp/>.

Information regarding these federally funded programs under the Official Languages in Education programs is available from the French Language Services Branch, Alberta Learning, 9th Fl, Devonian Building, 11160 Jasper

Avenue, Edmonton, AB T2K 0L2. Telephone (780) 427-2940 (toll free 310-0000), or e-mail <LSB@learning.gov.ab.ca>. As of May 2003, refer to <www.learning.gov.ab.ca> for new street address.

**Implications for the School Administrator:** Administrators of French immersion programs are encouraged to call the French Language Services Branch to request that a monitor be placed in their school at no cost to the school. Monitors work directly with students learning their second official language and are an invaluable resource to relay the culture associated with the language being taught. Administrators of high school French immersion programs are also encouraged to inform their students about this program as it may be of interest to those pursuing post-secondary studies, who require financial assistance or would like a language-related experience.

## Provincial Learner Assessment

### Roles and Responsibilities of the Learner Assessment Branch of Alberta Learning

The Learner Assessment Branch of Alberta Learning is committed to supporting teachers and school system administrators in assessing their students' achievement of provincial learner outcomes and in reporting their results to their communities. In accordance with the Student Evaluation Regulation (*School Act Alberta Regulation* 169/98), the branch develops and oversees the provincial student evaluation programs.

Grade 12 French immersion students who have studied a subject in the French language have the choice of writing that subject's Diploma Exam in French or English. Students' transcripts indicate separately the language in which a course is taken and the language in which the Diploma Exam has been written.

- The branch develops, administers and marks the provincial Achievement Tests administered in Grades 3, 6 and 9 and the Grade 12 Diploma Examinations. French versions of all Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations, except those in English Language Arts, are provided for students whose language of instruction is French. Achievement Tests for French Language Arts are administered in Grades 6 and 9.

- The branch works closely with other branches of Alberta Learning, especially the Curriculum Standards, French Language Services, Zone Services and Information Services branches. School jurisdictions are also extensively involved in the provincial testing programs, including extensive teacher involvement in test development, field testing, test administration and marking.

- To help ensure that as many students as possible can participate in the achievement testing and diploma examination programs, the branch provides special format achievement tests and diploma examinations (e.g. taped or Braille versions), as well as other accommodations for students with special examination writing needs (e.g. extra time or provisions for scribe assistance). In addition, the branch re-scores individual student's diploma examinations upon request and processes other appeals related to provincial testing.



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- The branch provides detailed school and school jurisdiction reports on achievement test and diploma examination results. These reports include provincial as well as local results. Multi-year reports are provided to assist schools and school authorities in reviewing and planning their instructional programs and reporting to the public. This information is also used as a key measure in the annual report of Alberta Learning. The multi-year reports are also provided to the public on Alberta Learning's Web site <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/testing/>.

In addition to its main mandate related to provincial testing, the branch coordinates the administration of the General Educational Development (GED) Tests in Alberta. These tests provide a means for some mature students to obtain a General Equivalency Diploma.

Contact Information:
Learner Assessment Branch
Harley Court Bldg.
10045 – 111 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2M5
Telephone: (780) 427-0010 (toll free 310-0000)
Fax: (780) 422-4200

## Results of Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams for French Immersion Programs

A question often asked by immersion parents is how well do immersion students perform on provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams as compared to regular program students. The Learner Assessment Branch has been administering these exams in French for nearly 20 years.

**The Results:** (adapted from Jim Brackenbury, "Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams: Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*, pp. 147–160. See Appendix C for the full article.)

Students in French immersion programs do very well on achievement tests and diploma examinations compared with students in all other programs. Part of the success of French immersion students may be attributed to the type of students who enrol in French immersion programs. Nevertheless immersion students do appear to benefit from participation in a French immersion program, not only by learning French but also by enhanced learning in English Language Arts and the content subjects.

- While there was a three-percent drop in the total enrolment in French immersion programs from 1996 to 2000, there was a 4.6 percent increase in the following two years.
- Although lowest in Grade 12, enrolment in Grade 12 increased by about 40 percent from 1996 to 2000 and continued to increase in 2000–2001 and 2001–2002.


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- The total course completions (subjects taken in French) by students in French immersion programs increased by about 44 percent from 1996 to 1999.
- The average pass rate (50 percent +) for students in French immersion programs over the past five years is approximately 97 percent. This has been consistently very high over time.
- The number of high school diplomas awarded to students in French immersion programs increased by 26 percent from 1996 to 1999.
- Achievement test participation rates for students in French immersion programs are usually equal to or above rates for students in all other programs.
- Students in French immersion programs usually perform better than non-French immersion students on Grades 3, 6, and 9 English Language Arts achievement tests.
- In mathematics, immersion students have a clear advantage by Grade 6 and a dramatic advantage by Grade 9.
- In science, the difference is not as significant until Grade 9, when immersion students are performing better than regular program students.
- Students who write the French version of diploma examinations usually perform equal to or better than non-French immersion students.

**For More Information** fmi

Brackenbury, Jim. "Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams: Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 147–160. (See Appendix C.)

## French Language Services

### Roles and Responsibilities of the French Language Services Branch of Alberta Learning

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The French Language Services Branch (FLSB)/*Direction de l'éducation française (DÉF)* of Alberta Learning is committed to developing educational services that foster optimal development of students learning French as a first or second language. In accordance with the *School Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the specific needs of its clienteles, the French Language Services Branch carries out its mission through the following:

- to advise the minister and to recommend policies on any matter regarding French language education
- to assume a leadership role in French language education matters based on the best known principles and practices
- to develop and evaluate French language programs of study and recommend these for ministerial approval
- to support the implementation of French language programs of study





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- to support the establishment and the maintenance of French language education services such as:
  - community school centres
  - distance learning
  - community involvement in schools
  - services provided by the Edmonton Regional Consortium
  - human and material resources
- to ensure the promotion of French language education
- to facilitate collaboration with its partners
- to represent Alberta Learning in the community
- to represent client needs within Alberta Learning
- to negotiate federal-provincial agreements that support French language education and administer the programs emanating from these agreements

Contact information:
French Language Services Branch
Alberta Learning
9th Fl, Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0L2
Telephone: (780) 427-2940 (toll free: 310-0000)
Fax: (780) 422-1947
<LSB@learning.gov.ab.ca>

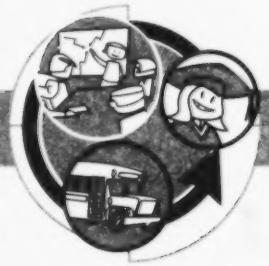
(As of May 2003, refer to <www.learning.gov.ab.ca> for new street address.)

## References

Bissonnette, Gérard. "Planning and Funding: Using the New Federal Funding Framework to the Benefit of Your French Immersion Students." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 265–275.

Slevinsky, Richard. "Funding and Costs: Can French Immersion be Adequately Supported?" *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report*. Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.

# 4 Providing Jurisdictional Leadership for French Immersion



The success of any French immersion program is dependent upon strong leadership throughout the education system. Within a school jurisdiction, the necessary leadership begins with the Board and in the central office. The school community and its decision-makers must value French language learning as part of a world-class education. Strong support for French immersion programs should be visible in and integral to the structure and functions of the total school system, including the equitable allocation of resources. (See Chapter 2, pages 24 and 26.)

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Trustees

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As elected individuals responsible to the community and to all constituents within that community, trustees should:

- become informed about French immersion programs: benefits, funding, how they work and how they are best supported (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3)
- look for ways and means of responding positively to requests related to the French immersion programs
- ensure that policies are enabling: that they underscore the value and benefits of French immersion in the broadest sense of governance and set the stage of successful establishment and ongoing support of the programs (see pages 53–54)
- ensure that French immersion is considered in the three-year business plans and that a long-term plan is in place to offer a full program from entry point to Grade 12 (see Chapter 1, page 3 and Chapter 2, page 32)
- commit to offering the best French immersion program possible

In 1998, the *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future* conference brought together some 160 trustees, senior central office administrators, and school principals of immersion programs. They explored issues and policy matters specific to French immersion programs and considered their respective roles and responsibilities for the programs. Delegates made more than 50 recommendations to guide themselves, their peers and other stakeholders in the effective delivery of French immersion programs in Alberta.



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**Some suggested actions and strategies to support trustee responsibilities.**

- Attend a conference specifically about French immersion programs.
- Read *Yes, You Can Help!* (Appendix A or see page 91 for order information.)
- Identify and understand all potential sources of funding for French immersion programs (see Chapter 3).
- Identify the additional costs of a French immersion program (Note: most costs are basic and do not require extra funds. Eg: teachers, desks, classroom space, general supplies).
- Set realistic and flexible enrolment targets (minimum enrolments) to enable the program to grow.
- Avoid using the French immersion program just to address a problem, such as preventing a school closure.
- When considering implementation and expansion of a French immersion program, understand the goals of the program (see Chapter 1, page 3) and be sure that decisions reflect the realistic achievement of these goals for the students.
- Where low enrolments threaten the quality of the program, consider joining forces with another school jurisdiction to offer one solid program.

The following are some of the recommendations made by and directed to trustees. They are presented here to offer potential direction for trustees.

- That trustees actively promote the creation of regional partnerships with neighbouring jurisdictions, and make provision for the participation of members from their own school jurisdictions. The purposes of such partnerships would include
  - networking among French immersion teachers and administrators,
  - sharing of school/jurisdiction resources,
  - sharing the services of a French immersion consultant/specialist, and
  - providing and coordinating quality professional development activities.

- That the Alberta School Boards' Association for Bilingual Education (ASBABE) actively promote among its members the development of regional partnerships.

- That trustees support the promotion of the benefits of French second language education and of French immersion as a credible program choice.

- That all trustees become better informed about the French immersion program through such means as:
  - increasing their involvement with school councils and steering committees,
  - inviting Canadian Parents for French (CPF) and students/graduates to make presentations at school board meetings, and
  - attending conferences and taking advantage of other learning opportunities.

- That trustees think in more creative and innovative ways when considering new means of delivery and support for French immersion programs. Suggestions include:
  - introducing late immersion,
  - sharing programs and resources with other jurisdictions;
  - establishing bilingual certificates, and
  - linking with community groups to promote the benefits of French immersion and provide students with real-life experiences in French.

- That school jurisdictions provide 100% exposure to French in the early childhood years of French immersion, and delay the introduction of English until Grade 3.

## For More Information

Kobasiuk, Phyllis, Brian Mitchell, and Joanne Fiest. "Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.

## Superintendent and Senior Central Office Administrators

The Superintendent and other senior administrators in any school jurisdiction must consider what they will bring to their community through their role in the community's education system. They must be prepared to respond to inquiries about the scope and quality of the programming being offered and to address the demands of the community they serve. These leaders have several responsibilities.

- To inform themselves about the benefits of second language learning (and specifically French second language learning) to their students overall education and futures (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 8, page 112).
- To inform themselves about immersion as a means of delivering French second language learning and of the conditions under which the goals of an immersion program can be achieved (see Chapter 1, page 3 and Chapter 2).
- To inform the Board of their findings and keep the Board informed of new information and developments.
- To identify potential issues and challenges related to the delivery of a French immersion program and strategies to address them.
- To ensure that policies are developed to provide the necessary framework for the program to succeed (see Chapter 3, pages 37–39 and next section).
- To ensure that key stakeholders (which includes principals, school staff and school councils) are well informed and on side.
- To ensure that when assigning administrators to schools with French immersion programs their values and beliefs are supportive of the program.
- To ensure that the community is informed of the program options available and their respective benefits.
- To ensure that the three-year business plans support the interests of students involved in the French immersion program.
- To ensure support from other jurisdiction level staff, such as those responsible for space allocation, transportation, curriculum support, and staff and student recruitment.

In 1998, the *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future* conference brought together some 160 trustees, senior central office administrators, and school principals of immersion programs. They explored issues and policy matters specific to French immersion programs and considered their respective roles and responsibilities for the programs. Delegates made more than 50 recommendations to guide themselves, their peers and other



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stakeholders in the effective delivery of French immersion programs in Alberta.

The following are some of the recommendations made by and directed to superintendents and other senior jurisdiction administrators. They are presented here to offer potential direction for senior administrators.

- That central office administrators actively promote networking among their immersion schools and establish regional partnerships with neighbouring jurisdictions, making provision for the participation of members from their own school jurisdictions. The purposes of such partnerships would include
  - networking among French immersion teachers and administrators,
  - sharing of school/jurisdiction resources,
  - sharing the services of a French immersion consultant/specialist, and
  - providing and coordinating quality professional development activities.

- That central office and school administrators deal directly and openly with perceptions of inequity resulting from different treatment of immersion and English programs, and be prepared to explain to parents and teachers the reasons for these differences.

- That central office administrators provide trustees with opportunities to increase their knowledge of immersion pedagogy and research.

- That school jurisdictions actively promote the benefits of French second language education and French immersion as a credible program choice, and that they devote more resources to this effort.

- That school jurisdictions establish the necessary support services for French immersion students with special needs and adopt policies and systematic procedures to:
  - assess the needs of students,
  - provide the required services, and
  - ease the transition if, after considering all other options, it is determined that a transfer from the immersion program is necessary.

- That central office administrators make provision for the participation of members from their own school jurisdictions in the joint Telus/Alberta Learning *2Learn Project* in order to identify and develop French web sites.

- That school jurisdictions provide 100 percent exposure to French in the early childhood years of French immersion, and delay the introduction of English until Grade 3.


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**For More Information** fmi

Callaghan, Brian, Judy Grigat, and Rick St. Arnaud. "Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.

## Policy Matters

b

Alberta Learning *Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual,* "Policy 1.5.2, Procedures" stipulates that boards offering French immersion programs must develop, keep current and implement written policy and procedures consistent with provincial policies and procedures. The following points should be considered in developing your jurisdiction's policies.

### Recognition of Second Language Learning as a Vital Component of Education

It has long been recognized that learning a second language benefits students' overall education and personal development. Since French is one of Canada's official languages, many parents want their children to have opportunities to learn French as a second language. Learning French is the chance to increase their children's opportunities for living and working throughout Canada and the world as well as fostering a greater understanding between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians.

Policies should include recognition that second language learning:

- fosters greater understanding between French- and English-speaking Canadians;
- increases opportunities for living and working in Canada and other parts of the world;
- increases cognitive abilities, creating a more flexible thinker;
- enhances knowledge of one's first language;
- makes learning additional languages easier; and
- increases understanding of other peoples and cultures.

### Access and Equity

While establishing and maintaining a French immersion program is ultimately a local decision, it is expected that any jurisdiction will respond to the needs of its community.

Policies should allow all students reasonable access to French immersion programs. This involves considering matters such as:

- location of the French immersion program,
- transportation of students to the program,
- inclusiveness of the program through provision of support such as for special needs, and



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- provision of information regarding the availability of the French immersion program (see Chapter 8).

Immersion programs should have access to all of the supports and services accorded the regular English program, such as:

- equivalent basic textual resources in French;
- access to technology to support the program, including French language keyboards and software;
- the same range of testing and student services as are available in the English program stream; and
- access to library materials and services that allow for reading and research in the French language.

## Long-range Planning

The jurisdiction's long-range or 3-year business plans should include the French immersion program.

### Funding and Accountability

All of the funding provided to English language programs should be available for French immersion programs as well. This includes funding for basic instruction, students with severe disabilities, English as a second language support, the early initiative, technology integration, learning resources credit allocation and the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement fund. (See Chapter 3, pages 39–40.)

In addition to this, jurisdictions offering French immersion programs have access to federal funding through the Official Languages in Education Program. These funds are intended to address the additional costs involved in offering a French immersion program. (See Chapter 3, pages 40–45.)

In developing and implementing long-range plans for French immersion, boards are encouraged to access all available funding and to direct it to the French immersion program to ensure its long-term viability and success.

Jurisdictions must be prepared to demonstrate to their communities that funds provided for a French immersion program are used for that purpose.

### Stability and Growth

Program stability contributes to the overall credibility of the French immersion program, making it an attractive choice for parents and students. The factors that make up a stable program include

- a declared commitment to offer the French immersion program from the entry grade through Grade 12;
- visible support from key decision-makers in the school jurisdiction, for example the superintendent and trustees attend functions held in French immersion schools; and

- jurisdictional support for initiatives that support the immersion program, such as French public speaking competitions or festivals/galas and exchange programs.

A firm commitment from the Board will do a lot to ensure stability of the French immersion program. Long-term growth includes

- expanding the program through the grades;
- locating the programs in facilities that can accommodate both growth and expansion and that ensure access by the broadest population;
- ensuring that supports are in place to meet the needs of all students;
- ensuring parents make informed decisions by providing them with the information and support they need; and
- tracking enrolments, identifying reasons for changes in enrolments and addressing the issues.

## Staffing

Some suggestions for long-range planning for staffing needs:

- It is useful to have teachers become familiar with your system before moving to French immersion. When regular staff vacancies occur, consider hiring people with French language skills and positive attitudes towards second language learning who can later serve the French immersion program.
- When hiring teaching staff, consider French language proficiency, understanding of immersion methodology and subject area specialties.
- When staffing leadership positions, attitudes towards French immersion and second language learning in general should be key considerations.
- Hiring of all staff, whether directly involved in the French immersion program or not, should take into consideration positive attitudes towards French immersion and second language learning—look for acceptance and inclusiveness.

## Professional Development

Some suggestions for long-range planning for the professional development needs related to French immersion:

- Recognize that French immersion teachers have specific professional development needs in addition to their subject areas, such as methodology and language and cultural development.
- Plan the school year calendar so that professional development days are scheduled to permit French immersion teachers to participate in major conferences when held nearby, for example, the national Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*) conference and the provincial ATA *Conseil Français* (CF) conference.
- Subscribe to professional journals related to French second language education and ensure access to these and other documents on a jurisdiction basis.
- Explore and take advantage of the services of the Edmonton Regional Consortium (ERC.) Under an arrangement between Alberta Learning and the Edmonton Regional Consortium (ERC), the ERC works with the other



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consortia to provide some French language inservicing throughout Alberta to meet the needs of French immersion teachers.

Contact information for the consortia is:

Executive Director
Calgary Regional Consortium
2616 – 18 Street N.E.
Calgary AB T2E 7R1
Tel: (403) 291-0967
Fax: (403) 250-3904

Executive Director
Central Alberta Regional Consortium
Box 5005
Red Deer AB T4N 6A1
Tel: (403) 357-3626
Fax: (403) 357-3642

Executive Director
Learning Network – East Central Consortium
832 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton AB T6G 2G5
Tel: (780) 492-0234
Fax: (780) 492-0390

Executive Director
Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium
#215, 909 – 3 Avenue North
Lethbridge AB T1H 0H5
Tel: (403) 381-5580
Fax: (403) 381-5709

Executive Director
Edmonton Regional Consortium
748, Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton AB T6B 2G5
Tel: (780) 492-5339
Fax : (780) 492-9972

Executive Director
Northwest Regional Learning Consortium
10213 – 99 Street
Grande Prairie AB T8V 2H3
Tel: (780) 882-7988
Fax : (780) 882-7908

- Inform educators about the availability and scope of the bursaries for professional development of French immersion teachers and how to obtain these funds.
- Recognize that central office and school administrators also have professional development needs specific to French immersion. Opportunities may include
  - French immersion conferences—such as the regular ones offered by Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*), Canadian Parents for French (CPF), and special initiatives such as the *Building the Future* series for French immersion administrators—can offer valuable insights, learning and networking opportunities for administrators.
  - Jurisdiction level networking opportunities—such as the Calgary Board of Education's French Immersion Leadership Group—networking among administrators.
  - Individual Teacher Bursaries provide educators with funding to attend a six-week French language course that can provide them with enhanced language skills and the opportunity to experience second language learning personally (see sidebar next page).

Calgary Board of Education principal, Donna Waraksa, says of her jurisdiction's French Immersion Leadership Group, "These [monthly] meetings helped to respond to the special issues and needs of these principals as they supervised their French immersion programs....this is a networking group that is supportive and collaborative, and we're trying at the same time to be proactive."

She also describes some of the issues dealt with by the group. "...how best can we spend our dwindling dollars, how can we obtain our resources, and what resources there are....We talk about promoting our programs through staffing, and the preparation of future administrators for our schools... For all of us this group means taking a lot of information back to our schools." —"The Role of the School Administrator," *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* (See Appendix E.)

## Support Services

Typically, jurisdictions have support systems in place for programs offered. These may include centralized document production, student transportation, counseling and other student services, and system committees for such tasks as designing report cards. Are the needs of the French immersion program considered when staffing for and providing these services? (See Chapter 2, page 26.)

In addition, those professionals offering support services in the jurisdiction should have a basic understanding of how immersion works and its implications within their own areas of expertise. For example, guidance counselors should be able to support the French immersion student in choosing appropriate high school courses or looking for career information.

## Quality and Assessment

The jurisdiction should undertake regular program reviews to ensure that three elements are in place and working well:

- Programs of Study and supporting documents are available and being used effectively.
- Adequate resources are available to administrators, teachers and students and are being used.
- Teachers are well supported.

The following may be used as indicators:

- provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams results (see Chapter 3, pages 45–47)
- jurisdiction-wide surveys administered to teachers, parents and students over a period of time to measure satisfaction with the program



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- tracking of enrolments from grade to grade to monitor retention of students
- student interest as demonstrated by enrolment in the program over time

One strategy for conducting reviews may be to collaborate with several other jurisdictions to form a review body and conduct regular reviews on a cyclical basis. Membership in such a collaborative effort may include superintendents, trustees, principals, jurisdiction consultants, teachers, parents, and students (from among participating jurisdictions).

***French Immersion: Sink or Swim?***

In July 2000, I took my first plunge into the waters of French Immersion. And although I wouldn't say that I'm an Olympic swimmer just yet, I am treading water and keeping my head above the waves.

During that summer 2000 course in Quebec City at the *Institut du Français UBC*, I quickly accomplished my first of two objectives for studying French as an adult learner. As coordinator of programs for Fort McMurray Catholic Schools, my lack of any French language abilities was an irritant to me: how could I coordinate programs properly if I couldn't empathize with a large portion of our learners? To rectify this I enrolled, and quickly understood first hand how it felt for students learning something totally new. Well, yes I had taken high school French but dropped it after my Grade 10 teacher gave me a passing grade only because I promised not to take French in Grade 11.

Empathizing with all the trials and tribulations of language learning and the struggle to understand and be understood, though, was only half my learning objective. The other purpose, actually being somewhat fluent in French, is still being worked on: Laval University courses in 2001 and 2002 and local college programs. Support from the Official Languages in Education Program offered through Alberta Learning has helped make my studying financially easier, however nothing yet seems to effectively ease my panic when I have to remember verb tenses and vocabulary while conversing with my Quebec friends.

*C'est la vie!*

—Victor Steel, Programs Coordinator, Fort McMurray RCSSD.

## For More Information

Canadian Parents for French has produced a self-assessment tool for use in helping schools assess for themselves how their French second language programs (both French immersion and core French) are faring. The self-assessment tool and instructions regarding how to use the self-assessment tool are available on the CPF website at <www.cpf.ca/English/resources/School%20Self/howtouse.htm> and in Appendix D.

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*French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.

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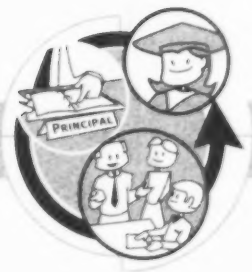
# 5 Providing School Leadership for French Immersion




## Overview

a

All schools, regardless of the programs offered, function best when their administrators base their practices and decisions on sound administrative and pedagogical theory. This applies equally well to administrators in schools offering French immersion. It is not necessary for principals to take a hands-off approach just because they do not speak French. A positive personal attitude and sound leadership and management skills are the key ingredients for success.

The strategies and ideas in this chapter are offered to assist French immersion program administrators. The following may serve as a general checklist.

- Do your planning processes and administrative procedures consider the views of all stakeholders? Do they recognize and respect the common and specific needs of the program(s) offered at the school? Is there a focus on the educational needs of each group of students?
- Does the school community recognize that each program is different, requiring different activities and measures? (When the programs are well defined and articulated, it is much easier to explain variances in approaches and decisions.)
- Are common concerns addressed by everyone?
- Are program-specific concerns identified and solutions found by staff, parents and, perhaps, students involved in the program?
- Is information about all programs readily available and offered to all inquirers?
- Is the leadership in the school facilitative?
- Does your supervision encourage professional growth of staff in each program?
- Is professional development encouraged and supported for all staff?



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- Are you familiar with indicators of good teaching practices in French immersion classrooms?
- Do you regularly visit the French immersion classrooms, observe students, find out what they can do and cannot do, discuss their achievement and progress with the teachers?
- Are you aware of the specific needs and sensitivities of French immersion parents? Do parents feel comfortable bringing their concerns to you?

In 1998, the *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future* conference brought together some 160 French immersion school administrators, senior central office administrators and trustees. They explored issues and policy matters specific to French immersion programs and considered their respective roles and responsibilities. Delegates made more than 50 recommendations to guide themselves, their peers, and other stakeholders in the effective delivery of French immersion programs in Alberta. The following are some of the recommendations made by and directed to school administrators. They are presented here to offer potential direction for principals.

- That school administrators establish effective time-tabling to accommodate the needs of French immersion students for continuous language learning (i.e., providing language-rich subjects taught in French each semester) and to provide them with flexibility in choosing core and optional subjects [taught in French].
- That school administrators create site-based teams to work with French immersion students with special needs. (See Chapter 9, pages 125–127.)
- That central office and school administrators deal directly and openly with perceptions of inequity resulting from different administrative decisions relative to the immersion and English programs, and be prepared to explain to parents and teachers the reasons for these differences.
- That school districts provide 100% exposure to French in the early childhood years of French immersion, and delay the introduction of English until Grade 3.
- That school administrators support the use of e-mail and the Internet for networking among French immersion students, teachers and administrators.

## Creating a School Culture

b

School administrators have a responsibility to create and nurture a school culture that supports the goals of the French immersion program. The school's vision, mission and belief statements as well as planning documents must recognize second language learning as a vital component of a high-quality education and reflect the value and needs of the French immersion program within the school community. The process by which these documents are developed should include the broadest educational philosophies and allow all stakeholders to have ownership.

"A School Improvement Plan developed by the total staff would identify desired student learning outcomes to be achieved across the subject program areas. These identified student learning outcomes would serve as the parameters for a student-centered approach to subject area planning, including planning for the second language program. All programs are valued in a school culture that focuses on student needs and a student-centered approach to instruction."

—Ron May, former principal, Calgary Board of Education.

While they may find it easier in a French immersion centre, even when the program is housed in a dual-track setting, administrators can shape the school's culture to fully support the goals of the French immersion program and to enrich the education of all students at the same time. The dual-track school provides additional opportunities to further the acceptance of differences and to demonstrate equality of treatment and fairness.

Here are some strategies that may be considered in creating a supportive school culture.


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Here are some strategies that may be considered in creating a supportive school culture.

Use French as a language of communication whenever possible. Using French in everyday situations helps to make the language more real for students and gives them an added purpose for studying the language. French becomes more acceptable not only to the immersion students and their families but also to the entire school community. Some ideas include:

- Delivering some announcements over the public address (P.A.) system in French. The administrator with little or no French language skills can delegate this task to other individuals in the school who have the appropriate skills: a teacher, a parent, a student, or a school aide, perhaps on a rotating basis.
- Encouraging staff members to speak French amongst themselves, providing role models for the students.
- Making French evident throughout the school, e.g., signs (*bibliothèque*/ library), displays of students' work, and French background music or radio at noon hour.
- Using French with pride during school assemblies and other activities, e.g., sing "O Canada" in French as well as English.

"The French language must not be confined to the classroom! It must be brought out of the classroom and experienced as much as possible to lend credibility to what the teachers are doing inside the classroom, and to validate the language for the students."

—Richard Slevinsky, Alberta Learning.

Celebrate and promote cultural events that are important to the francophone people. If local Francophones are having a *cabane à sucre* (maple sugar festival), encourage students and their families as well as staff members to participate. In a dual-track setting, encourage all students to participate. Extending an invitation to all members of the school community will increase harmony among the different programs. Encourage participation in theatre and musical presentations; invite artists and musicians to the school for all to enjoy. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 119–133 for a variety of opportunities.)

Seek out and take advantage of all the community supports available to students in French. Strategies that seek to show students and the greater school community that French is used in the local community will do much to support the goals of the French immersion program. When planning a field trip to a local site, for example, teachers should ask if the tour can be given in French; if not, whether a French-speaking guide might be provided, either by the school or the site administration. Other initiatives include

- seeking community members with French language skills who might support a reading program for the primary grades,
- bringing in local artists who use French as a language of communication, and
- creating a partnership with a local French radio or television station where students participate on the air.

Facilitate good working relations among staff members of the French immersion program and other programs offered in the school. The goals of the French immersion program are best achieved when all staff members of a school support them. Structuring activities where French immersion teachers talk and network with their colleagues will help demystify the program and may be an important first step to getting broader support for the program. These may include the following:

- Provide time for French language arts and English language arts teachers to plan together the teaching of specific language skills and strategies. By



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so doing, needless repetitions are avoided and transfers of skills common to both languages are encouraged. (See Chapter 1, page 7 and Chapter 5, page 72.)

- Encourage French immersion teachers to work with teachers in other programs and other schools on such projects as school or district level curriculum development, budget committees, etc.

Promote the program as a program of choice for all students. A common misperception is that the French immersion program is for gifted or advantaged students. School administrators are in a position to correct this perception and promote the benefits of the program for all potential learners. By doing so, they can do much to ensure that the school culture is supportive of all students who choose the French immersion program. In practical terms, this means that once the program is offered to all students, administrators must ensure that the necessary support systems are in place for all students to succeed. These supports include support systems for special needs students, library resources, French language software for computers, and so on. If these necessary support systems are not offered, the school culture will continue to reinforce the perception that the French immersion program is best suited for gifted or advantaged students or that it is not on an equal footing with the English stream.

### For More Information

Brault, Aline, Marcel Lavallee, Robert Martin, and Alain Nogue. "A French Immersion School Culture: The Foundation for Success." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. (See Appendix E.)

## Staffing: Setting the Stage for Success

C

Since teachers have a considerable influence on the overall success of French immersion, staffing the program or school is perhaps the single most important responsibility administrators have. Administrators must select and maintain a team of staff members that have the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to support and advance the goals of the French immersion program. (See Chapter 2, pages 24–25.)

All staff in the school—teachers, office staff (as they are often a parent's first contact), custodial staff, and support staff such as librarians—should have a general understanding of, and a positive attitude towards, all programs offered in the school. All school staff should know what French immersion is, how it works and the importance of the use of French in school. All staff should be encouraged to work together to achieve the goals of all programs. (Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* is a useful tool for providing staff with an introduction to French immersion.)

## Areas or Domains to Consider When Interviewing Prospective Staff Members

One of the most important areas to consider is the candidate's philosophy of immersion learning and teaching. Ask them to talk about the assumptions they make with respect to learning a second language in an immersion context. These assumptions should include the following:

- Learners may have to hear and say a new word or structure several times before incorporating it into their repertoire.
- Learners have to be given many opportunities to speak in class.
- Learners should be exposed to different French speakers so that they get used to different voices, accents, sentence structures, and vocabulary.
- Language learning occurs best when a variety of strategies are used in the classroom.
- Language teaching crosses all disciplines; e.g., mathematics teachers are first and foremost teachers of language, then mathematics.

(See Chapter 2, page 7.)

A candidate's approach to teaching a second language is also important. Ask them to describe how they would approach their teaching in a French immersion situation. The teaching must correspond to the assumptions made about language learning. For example, if the interviewee states that learners require several exposures to a word before incorporating it into his or her repertoire, then the planned learning environment must reflect this need.

What are their French language skills? (See Chapter 2, page 25.) Since all French immersion teachers are first and foremost teachers of the French language, it is important to know the candidate's French language proficiency and training. French immersion teachers must have excellent native or native-like French language skills to serve as models for students. (The assistance of a colleague fluent in French may be needed to assess language proficiency during the selection process.)

What is their understanding of, and training in, second language teaching methodology? All immersion teachers must contribute to the students' French language development while teaching content. Inquire about the interviewee's second language methodology training to get his or her understanding of the pedagogical approach used in French immersion. Overt and planned language teaching must continue in all subject areas at all grade levels throughout the French immersion program.

What is their area of expertise or specialization? In addition to having excellent French language skills and second language teaching methods, French immersion teachers must be able to teach the knowledge, skills and attitudes identified for the different subjects. Generally speaking, the candidate's own subject-specific language ability will be enhanced if he or she developed his or her own subject area of expertise in French. A French-speaking chemist who has studied in English, for example, may not have the language required to teach chemistry in French.

> "French immersion involves a complex mixture of teaching both subject matter and skills in the language *at the same time*. Consequently, I would argue that French immersion teachers need, in addition to teaching subject matter, to make a conscious effort to structure that teaching so as to provide students with opportunities to practice a full range of language skills—not merely with emphasis on understanding but also on speaking. In planning their lessons, immersion teachers should always bear in mind the questions 'what is it my students can say (in which case I need not)' and 'what is it I can *make* my students say?'"
>
> —David S. Ireland, "The Classroom as an Unnatural Setting: An Analysis of the Notion of Functional Immersion," n.d. Unpublished.

Do they have additional skill sets? Since successful French immersion programs have a rich array of curricular and extra-curricular offerings, it may be helpful to select individuals who can offer additional skill sets in such areas as music, drama, languages other than French and English, physical education, and so on. This may also facilitate scheduling, especially in schools with a lower enrolment.

What are their previous work experiences? As in any employment interview, administrators should probe the candidate's work record. Candidates who have had previous successful teaching experiences, where French was used as a first language, may not necessarily have the skills required to teach in the French immersion program, where French is taught as a second language.

Do they understand the added challenges of teaching in French immersion? Attempt to find out from interviewees what they understand these challenges to be and how they are prepared to cope. Examples might include the following:

- Resources such as hands-on materials for the early years—posters, films or videos, computer programs and audio recordings—are not as readily available as in the English program.
- Services in the French language (such as guided tours for field trips) are not always available.
- Parent volunteers with French language proficiency are not always available.
- Home-school communication (newsletters, report cards, etc.) is in English, which may pose a challenge for a candidate who may not be proficient in English. (A strategy here might be to have an English-speaking colleague attend parent-teacher interviews along with the immersion teacher.)

What is their understanding of the target clientele for a French immersion program? Attempt to get the candidate's understanding of the different needs of students registered in French first language programs, French immersion programs, and French second language programs. (See Appendix A *What do I want for my child?* and Chapter 1, page 9.)

Explore the candidate's potential contribution to the overall success of the school. Managing an effective school requires that all staff members contribute to its overall program. In addition to sound classroom teaching, staff members may contribute in the following areas:

- helping with the extra-curricular program
- marketing the French immersion program
- representing the school at the jurisdiction level
- assuming leadership for a particular curricular area, e.g., mathematics, science, technology

Schools can no longer afford to ignore the social and psychological needs of the socially marginalized student. We have begun to understand the societal costs associated with not intervening early in the case of a child who is at risk of or experiencing social marginalization. Ask interviewees how they intend to handle such cases in their classrooms and during other school activities, such as during recess and on field trips.

Explore the candidate's short-term and long-term career plans. For many school jurisdictions, recruitment and retention of French immersion teachers is a major concern. The shortage of French immersion teachers in many jurisdictions across the country provides ample opportunity for teachers to move around. To address this concern, the interviewer may wish to provide an overview of the support systems and strategies in place for teachers. (See page 68.)

Explore the candidate's own goals for lifelong learning and maintaining and/or improving their French language proficiency. Since Alberta is an English-speaking province, French immersion teachers may express a need to immerse themselves in a French language environment from time to time (e.g., Quebec, New Brunswick, France) in order to maintain a high level of French language proficiency. (Teacher bursaries are provided to educators who work with French immersion students. See Chapter 3, page 41, and the next section. Administrators are encouraged to provide this information to newly recruited teachers.) Other areas worth probing include technology, leadership training, and personal development courses.

French immersion teachers should have native or native-like fluency in both oral and written French and the ability to communicate in English orally and in writing for non-instructional purposes (see Chapter 2, page 25). The oral language proficiency of candidates will be assessed by the interview committee (assuming that French and English language skills are represented on the interviewing committee). The committee will also want to assess potential candidates' written language skills. The two following written assignment questions may be used to this end:

- *Que feriez-vous afin d'encourager l'apprenant en immersion française de continuer son développement langagier?*
- How would you approach the teaching of culture in a French immersion program?

## For More Information

Mayne, Lise, and Wayne Hampton. "Understanding the French Immersion Teacher: Implications for Training, Hiring, Supervising, and Supporting Your French Immersion Staff." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 253–264. (See Appendix E.)

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## Supporting Newly Recruited Staff

Before beginning the task of supervising newly recruited teachers, administrators must ensure that necessary supports are in place.

- Many immersion teachers will have recently moved to your community from their home in another province or city and would benefit from a welcoming and supportive environment. Activities and strategies that are at once welcoming and supportive will go a long way to ensuring that newly recruited teachers settle in and plan to stay. These may include the following:
  - planned social events to integrate the newly recruited teacher into the community
  - professional support (such as support from jurisdiction staff, a mentor or buddy system, or the availability of professional development funds for inter-school visitations)
  - assistance with finding appropriate housing
  - information on the community's values and attitudes (Teachers from Eastern Canada may need assistance and guidance to understand the values and mores inherent in certain communities. For example, is it acceptable for young teachers to live co-ed?)

- Are newly recruited teachers provided with the necessary documentation and other resources that will enable them to make a good first impression with parents, students, and their colleagues? Vital information and documentation may include the school handbook, key information with respect to certain students (e.g., is there a visually impaired student in the class? a physically challenged student?) and school routines.

- Are new teachers provided with all the documents and information (e.g., programs of study, basic resources) required for preparing a set of long-range plans? Does the administrator provide long-range plans for new teachers? Or does the administrator provide assistance (e.g., central office, experienced teacher) to prepare long-range plans?

- Do teachers have access to appropriate textual and non-print resources that will allow them to meet the general and specific learning outcomes of the programs of study?

- Are adequate support systems in place to enable the newly recruited teacher to integrate the special needs student in the French immersion classroom? For the visually impaired student, is there sufficient aide time assigned? Are appropriately adapted textual materials available? What about computer and other technology? (See Chapter 9.)

- Is there a support system in place for those newly recruited teachers who need assistance with home-school communication in English? What about report cards? Will someone be able to provide assistance with the written comments?

Sally Rehorick, a professor in the Second Language Education Centre at the University of New Brunswick advises:

> ...certain aspects of a French second-language class can, in fact, be observed more easily when one does not understand the language of instruction. Some aspects of the class become much more noticeable when the content of the discourse is not understandable.

She goes on to explain that,

> In addition, a principal who wants to know more about the content of what is being taught should not hesitate to initiate discussions in English with either students or the teacher. Such discussions will in no way diminish the efforts of the class participants to learn their second language effectively.

—S. Rehorick, "But I can't speak French: More Thoughts on Supervising the Second-Language Classroom", 1996, pp 1–3.

- For teachers new to the profession or new to Alberta, are measures taken to protect them from taking on too heavy an assignment? New teachers may still be adapting to the rigours and expectations of the profession. Teachers new to Alberta, especially from Quebec, will have to adapt to a new milieu.

### Supervising and Evaluating Staff

Once the supports are in place, the administrator will supervise the teacher for both formative and summative purposes. Given a sound knowledge of how the program works and what to watch for (see Chapter 2, pages 24–25), even the administrator who does not speak French can effectively supervise French immersion teaching staff.

The following areas should be considered when supervising French immersion teachers at any grade level.

- Has the teacher created an atmosphere that favours the development of the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, cultural and linguistic development of the students?
- Does the teacher use the overt language teaching strategies required in the French immersion setting? Are activities structured in such a way as to permit students to see and to hear language repeatedly in a meaningful context until such time as the student can produce it? Does the teacher use songs, games, and so on to allow students to practice the vocabulary and structures without appearing to do so?
- Has the teacher made an attempt to become familiar with the learners' interests? Is the learning environment age appropriate?
- Does the teacher demonstrate an awareness of the students' feelings about learning French or learning in French?
- Does the teacher build in time for students to communicate, orally and in writing, in French? Is there encouragement for spontaneous use of the language through teacher-student and student-student interaction?
- Does the teacher praise and reward the learners' efforts to communicate in French?
- Does the teacher use French (written and spoken) as much as possible? (Remember that English should be used when the learners' safety, either physical or psychological, is at risk.)
- Are guest speakers, community members and parents with a proficiency in French invited into the classroom? Remember that these individuals will provide a different voice, a slightly different vocabulary, and different expressions than the teacher provides.
- Is student work on display in the classroom and rotated regularly? Are the errors corrected?

There are several Web sites that address the needs of French immersion teachers for research, networking, professional development and resources. Encourage your teachers to find and explore these. To start, try:

- Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/ACPI) <acpi.scedu.umontreal.ca>
- Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers <www.CASLT.org>
- Second Language Education Centre <www.unb.ca/slec>
- Ontario Institute for Studies in Education <www.oise.utoronto.ca>
- *Le Centre canadien des ressources sur l'enseignement des langues* <www.sfu.ca/ccrel>
- Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition <http://carla.acad.umn.edu>
- Center for Applied Linguistics <www.cal.org>
- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages <www.actfl.org>
- American Association of Teachers of French <http://aatf.utsa.edu>
- Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages/*Commissariat aux langues officielles* <www.ocol-clo.gc.ca>
- Canadian Heritage/*Patrimoine canadien* <www.pch.gc.ca>



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"When the teacher talks, the students do not talk....I wish to draw attention to the idea that whether the teacher talks or not is not a matter of preference or taste, but rather a matter of pedagogy—at least, in second-language immersion. There are many objectives to be accomplished by talking—students need to learn to understand; students need a model; students need to be told what to do either socially or academically; students need to be told information they did not have before. But the teacher should bear in mind that these objectives are achieved at the expense of providing an opportunity for students to talk and consequently the teacher should be asking him/herself whether he/she or the students should be doing the talking."

—David S. Ireland, "The Classroom as an Unnatural Setting: An Analysis of the Notion of Functional Immersion." n.d. Unpublished.

- Does the teacher have sound classroom management skills?
- Does the teacher always demonstrate a positive attitude toward the French immersion program?
- Are daily, unit and long-range plans in place?
- Is there a sound student evaluation system in place? Will the teacher be adequately prepared to justify the content of the report card (both comments and grades)?
- Does the teacher contribute to the overall program offered at the school? Does the teacher contribute to the extra-curricular program?

Although the above require little or no proficiency in French, the following areas of inquiry do. The administrator with little or no French language proficiency will want to seek the assistance of a colleague who has the necessary French language skills.

- Does the teacher use appropriate and correct language both orally and in written form? Are student errors (both oral and written) identified and corrected?
- Does the teacher demonstrate an awareness of the role that phonics plays in French language teaching? Since students imitate what they hear, it is of utmost importance to pronounce correctly the phonemes of the language and to use the correct intonation, and rhythm.
- Are gestures, mime and other body language cues used appropriately to enhance communication?
- Is there an appropriate use of concrete materials and audio-visual aids such as prints, films, tapes, slides, manipulatives, and computers?
- Does the teacher present one difficulty or language problem at a time? It is much better to focus on one problem and address it thoroughly before moving on to the next, than to focus on all of a student's language difficulties at once.
- Does the teacher allow students the time necessary to express themselves freely and clearly?
- Does the teacher use group work in such a way as to
  - consider the needs of each individual group member?
  - respect the learning rate of each member?
  - encourage the active participation of each group member?
  - structure the activity to facilitate language development?
- Is there evidence of good teacher-student rapport? Is the atmosphere one in which students are happy, motivated, and willing to take risks?

## Meeting the Professional Development Needs of Staff Members

In addition to the regular professional development needs of teachers of regular English language programs, French immersion teachers may have several specific needs.

First, they need to ensure that their own French language skills are maintained. Remember that living in an English environment does not readily facilitate language growth and maintenance. French immersion teachers may want to pursue opportunities to immerse themselves in the language through enrolment in courses or programs in Quebec, New Brunswick, or even France. Other strategies may include reading French materials (e.g., novels and professional journals). Are adequate resources available at the school level to permit teachers to address the maintenance and development of their French language skills?

Second, at the secondary level, they may need to continue taking courses or workshops in their area of expertise in French. Teachers who study a discipline in French are much better equipped language-wise than those who have studied it in English. French immersion teachers may prefer to take courses via distance education from a French language university or institution than a locally offered course or program in English.

Third, French immersion teachers need to take methodology courses and workshops designed specifically to provide them with the tools required for teaching in this second language program. Again, not all teachers proficient in French have the teaching methods that will allow them to be effective in the French immersion classroom.

Fourth, they need to network with and learn from other French immersion teachers. Encourage French immersion teachers to attend French immersion conferences and professional development sessions such as those offered by the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*) and *Le Conseil français* (French teachers council of the Alberta Teachers' Association). The regional consortia also offer professional development activities (see Chapter 4, pages 55–56).

Finally, French immersion teachers need professional development materials on a continuing basis. Establish a professional development collection for French immersion teachers including subscriptions to journals and magazines related to French immersion and second language learning. (See sidebar.)

Establish an adult corner in the library and stock it with French novels, videos, magazines, and general interest material.

Here are a few periodicals you will want to consider for your professional development library collection:

- *Canadian Modern Language Review*
  University of Toronto Press/Journals Division
  5201 Dufferin St.
  Toronto, ON M3H 5T8
  T: (416) 667-7994
- *Education et Francophonie Association canadienne d'education de langue francaise*
  ACELF
  268, rue Marie-de-l'Incarnation
  Quebec, QC G1N 3G4
  T: (418) 681-4661
- *Mosaic Editions Soleil* Publishing Inc.
  P.O. Box 847
  Welland, ON L3B 5Y5
  T: (905) 788-2674
- *Inform'APPIPC*
  c/o Josiane Parrouty (Editor)
  Laity View Elementary School
  210323-123rd Avenue
  Maple Ridge, BC V2X 4B4
  T: (604) 871-2283
- *Babel: Journal of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Assn.*
  2 Rubida Grove
  Aldgate, South Australia 5154
  T: +61 (0)8 8339 4089
- *Chuchoteries Le Conseil français* of the Alberta Teachers' Association
  11010 – 142 Street
  Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1
  T: (780) 447-9400,
  1 800 232-7208

### For More Information

Mayne, Lise, and Wayne Hampton. "Understanding the French Immersion Teacher: Implications for Training, Hiring, Supervising, and Supporting Your French Immersion Staff." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 253–264. (See Appendix E.)

## Organizing for Instruction

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There are two major considerations when organizing for instruction. The first is that the more exposure students have to French (through instruction and activities), the better their French language skills (see Chapter 1, page 10). The second is that children tend to associate an individual with a language.

Avoid combining early and late immersion students.

There is some speculation among researchers that early French immersion students' French language development may be slowed when their classes are combined with late immersion students. Consider keeping these streams separate throughout the grades. However, if combining classes is necessary in high school, consider treating French language arts separately for each group. (See Chapter 1, page 11.)

Consideration should be given to limiting a French immersion teacher's instructional assignments to subjects or courses offered in French. For example, it may be better not to ask the French immersion homeroom teacher to teach the ELA class. (See Chapter 2, page 30.)

The instructional assignments must consider the number of different courses or subject areas teachers are required to teach. Teaching one subject five times requires less preparation time than preparing for five different courses or subjects.

In dual-track schools, administrators may also want to ensure that there is a balanced staff in both programs. Age, experience, gender and formal teacher training may be considered when staffing a school. Staffing the English program, for example, with teachers who are more experienced and highly trained when compared to the French immersion program may deter parents from choosing the latter.

When organizing for instruction, consider the following:

- French immersion students are taught two language arts programs: ELA and FLA. By considering the language arts experience as a whole and working together, teachers will understand that many of the language arts learning outcomes are the same for both programs. They will be able to take advantage of this understanding when preparing lessons and to realize time savings that can be put to good use elsewhere in the students' day. Administrators might consider giving some time for these teachers to work together to this end.

- Because of the need for students to use the language and teachers to model it, the French immersion classroom may, in fact should, be noisier than an English program classroom. (See Chapter 1, pages 5–6.)

- When planning instructional supports, remember the need for French software, French start-up programs, and sheet music in French for teachers of music. Early literacy and enrichment programs should also be done in French.

- At the secondary level, ensure that French is offered in each semester (that is, at all times throughout the year). For example, consider offering FLA and band as year-long courses to accommodate French immersion students (like music, learning languages happens best when practiced daily), integrating FLA and social studies into a ten-credit block. When timetabling, consider immersion students' needs and interests, for example,

avoid scheduling the only French language arts course at the same time as the only band course. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 85–86.)

- Ensure flexibility of organization so teachers may group and regroup students to meet the specific needs of the students and take advantage of teacher expertise.
- Accommodate student exchanges. If students are going to be involved in the Alberta-Quebec exchange (intended for grade 11 students, see Chapter 3, page 43), schedule the program to accommodate it.
- Alternative methods of delivery, such as online and distance learning for courses at the secondary level, are developing fast. Look for ways to take advantage of these advances for the benefit of the French immersion program.
- Partnerships with post-secondary institutions can add to and enhance opportunities, for example, consider offering a university level French course in Grade 12.

## Establishing and Maintaining a Library

A library designed to support the French immersion program is a must for any French immersion school. When planning for the library, consider the following areas:

- Is there a budget for developing and maintaining a French collection?
- When you walk into the library, is it evident that it serves the goals of the French immersion program? For example, is the French language visible in wall and table displays and on signage?
- Can the children use the library in French? Can they do a computer search in French? Can they sign out a book in French? Are they encouraged to speak French in the library?
- In the reference section, are there an appropriate number of French dictionaries, periodicals and encyclopedia?
- In the collection, is there an appropriate quantity of French resources and do they match the expectations of the programs of study? For example, for a unit on horses, are there equal resources in French and English? Are these materials age appropriate? Is fiction as well as non-fiction available in French?
- Do students have access to the library when required?
- Is reading at home encouraged by allowing parents to use the library with their children?

Alberta Learning has developed three annotated bibliographies of French literary resources for immersion students: Grades 4–6 (LRC product # 432766), 7–9 (LRC product # 356354) and 11–12 (LRC product # 356362). These are an excellent resource for both the FLA teachers and school librarians.



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- Is there a parent section with appropriate material, such as on language learning and how immersion works, with curriculum handbooks? Do parents have access to the collection? The school council or local CPF chapter may be able to assist with support for this initiative. (See also, Chapter 11, pages 141–142.)

*NOTE:* All teachers who teach French immersion students in French are teachers of the French language. It is therefore incumbent upon all these teachers to have attitudes that serve the interests of the students in the program.

- Does the librarian have a working knowledge of French to facilitate working with the collection and the students?
- Do you subscribe to French book clubs? (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 120–121.)
- Are book exchanges and the donation of used French books from the community encouraged to vary the collection?
- Are book lists prepared for French immersion parents and included in the school newsletter?

## Responsibilities of Staff and School Councils

### The Teaching Staff

In addition to providing instruction or supervision according to s. 18 of the *School Act*, all teaching staff in a school that offers French immersion are ambassadors for the program. As such, they should have a general understanding of how French immersion works and be positive towards this program at all times in the school and the community.

### The Resource and Support Staff

Staff who support French immersion teachers include school counsellors, secretaries and office clerical staff, teacher librarians and technicians, classroom aides, and special needs teachers. All should have:

The school secretary is often the first person to speak with a French immersion parent or parent seeking information about the program, and as such plays an important role as ambassador. (See box, page 116.)

- positive attitudes towards second language learning, and
- an understanding of how immersion works and its implications for their own area of expertise before they work with, do assessments on or make recommendations regarding French immersion students. For example, diagnostic tests must be interpreted in light of what we know about French immersion before any recommendation is made. (See Appendix G "Learning Assistance Within French Immersion: The Experience of Two Districts.")

### The School Council

The school council acts in the interests of all stakeholders in the school community to enhance student learning. This includes the French immersion students and parents. The school council of a dual- or multi-track school

should include among its members representatives from both (or all) programs offered in the school.

The following article was published in the fall 1995 edition of *CPF Alberta News*. It has been reprinted here to provide administrators with insights and potential direction for the operation of a school council in a dual- or multi-track setting.

## Addressing Program Needs in Dual Track Schools

*The following article was written for CPF Alberta by Raymond Lamoureux, Acting Director of Alberta Education's Language Services Branch. M. Lamoureux's previous experience includes the administration of a triple-track school which involved English, immersion, and Francophone streams.*

In Alberta most French immersion programs are located in schools that also provide an English language program. The effective operation of a French immersion program in a dual track school is much more difficult than in a single program school and provides a challenge to school administrators and to parents.

However, with the collaboration of all partners, this type of organization can provide an enriching experience for all participants. This type of school operation provides an excellent opportunity to communicate Canadian values and to put into practice the dynamics found in an officially bilingual and culturally diverse country.

The effective operation of any school and especially a school that operates more than one program depends on a planning process and administrative procedures that are respectful of the needs in each program.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING

Planning to address the needs of students at the school and at the school board level is not new. The importance of planning and reporting at the provincial level and at the school jurisdiction level is reflected in the provincial three-year business plan. Starting in 1995/96, school jurisdictions will be required to provide annual plans that are aligned with provincial directions for education and to report on their students' results. The purpose of planning is to enhance accountability at all levels of the educational system. In the planning process, school boards are encouraged to involve jurisdiction and school staffs and parents councils. School level involvement ensures that the system is focused on the educational needs of students.



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## THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS

Alberta Education recognizes the rights of parents to be involved in their children's education and for parents, community members, and school staff to be involved in key decisions about the education of students. Current legislation provides the opportunity for each school operated by a board to establish a school council. School councils have the role of advising the principal on any matter relating to the school.

School councils in dual track schools should provide opportunities for all parents to have significant input and involvement in the general operation of the schools and in the realization of the objectives of each program.

To ensure that all actions of the school are directed to support the needs of clients and to make the best use of available human and financial resources, the parent council should solicit parent input to define the following:
MISSION – a clear and concise statement of the school's educational purpose with a focus on the students in each program.
MANDATE – a statement of the school's responsibility flowing from the School Act and the Goals of Schooling.
VISION – a description of what parents would like each program to look like 3 to 5 years from now.
BELIEFS – a statement that incorporates the values of each parent group. A useful mechanism to define belief statements is for parents and staff in each program to identify what they do not like to see happen in their program and in the general operation of the school. The belief statements would reflect the opposite of the concerns identified.
GOALS – a statement of long-term and short-term changes identified for each program and for the general operation of the school. Goals should include plans to use community resources to support each program and to support activities of interest to all students.
PLAN FOR THE YEAR – a plan of activities to reflect the short-term goals and address the needs at the program level and for the benefit of all students.

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

In a dual track school the operation of the school council and the results of planning have to reflect the needs of each student and the needs of each program. For this to occur, a number of conditions must be present:
✓ Strong leadership by the principal and the school council.
✓ An understanding by the school administration and all parents that in the school there are common needs for all students and that there are other needs specific to each program.
✓ An understanding that common needs are the topics for discussion and recommendation by all stakeholders. These may include dress codes, supervision, lunch programs, school supplies, parent-teacher interviews.
✓ An understanding that program-specific needs should be identified and solutions proposed by parents and staff involved in the program.

✓ There is a need in such a setting to accept that each program is different and that different activities are required to address program needs. To be fair in such an environment, one cannot endorse the idea that what is good for one program is also good for the other. In a French immersion program, for instance, there is a need to provide field trips and experiences for French language development. In the English program, field trips could be held for a different purpose.
✓ Parents in each program should have the feeling that the school administration is using fully the resources available to each program for the enhancement of that program.

✓ There should be a mechanism that enables parents from one program to understand the needs of the other program and the activities associated with that program. In such an environment, one cannot prevent parents from comparing what happens in one program to what happens in the other. What is important is for parents to feel that the program objectives in the program their child attends are being fully met.

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

In order to adequately address program needs in such a school, the following practices have proven effective:

⇨ A parent council with representation from both programs is established.

⇨ The parent council provides for meetings of all parents on a regular basis.

⇨ A schedule of parent meetings is established. All parents are invited to these meetings. Recommendations for the operation of the school and programs are made by parents present.

⇨ At each meeting, parents are first given an opportunity to meet by program, to record the results of their deliberations, and to agree on what they may wish to share at a general assembly. Meetings by program group provide an opportunity for parents to freely discuss program needs without being intimidated by the presence of the other group. Each group's recommendations are communicated to the principal.

⇨ Following program group meetings, there is a general assembly where a representative of each of the program groups can share the group's recommendations for the principal and other information they may wish to communicate.

⇨ At the general assembly, common school needs are discussed and recommendations made to the principal regarding common needs.



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### A TRUE PARTNERSHIP

In a dual track school a true partnership is required. Parent, staff, and student must all feel that a sincere effort is made to recognize them and to address their needs. In such a school, one would expect the following:

- The visible presence of the two programs as you enter the school.
- The attractive features of both programs and details about each program in the school's handbook and publicity.
- A general feeling of respect for differences.
- Open communication about programs and general understanding and acceptance of program needs and activities.
- Sharing of resources between programs. The immersion program provides a wide variety of print and non-print resources that may serve to enrich the core French (FSL) program in a school. Special equipment purchased for one program may quite often serve to enrich experiences in the other program.
- Within the school, communications could be made in French and in English. This provides an excellent opportunity for all students learning French to practice their comprehension skills.

The parent council members become a key instrument along with the principal to communicate the mode of operation, to serve as facilitators at meetings, and to ensure that recommendations from program committees and from the general assemblies are implemented as much as possible.

### A GOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL

Dual track schools with French immersion programs in many ways reflect the reality of Canada. In them we find a culturally diverse community and the use of the two official languages. The flexibility, understanding, adaptability, accommodation, and trust required by the educational partners to make these schools work can provide a good learning environment for children.

Source: *CPF Alberta News*, 47 (Fall 1995)

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# 6 Supporting and Working with Parents

Because French immersion is an alternative program that requires active choice on the part of parents, most French immersion parents tend to be very interested in their children's education and eager to be involved. At the same time, the very nature of French immersion makes parental involvement in their children's education seem more difficult than for most English program parents. French immersion parents who have little or no French language proficiency, and that is the great majority, often worry that

- they will not be able to monitor their children's academic progress;
- they will not be able to help their children with homework;
- they will not be welcome in the classroom, nor will they be able to volunteer at the school because they do not speak French; and
- their children will not learn to read and write well in English.

Yet one of the reasons often cited for the success of the French immersion program is the strong role parents have played in establishing and supporting the program. How, then, can French immersion administrators ensure that their French immersion parents have the support they need to feel comfortable with and be effectively involved in their children's education? How can French immersion administrators work with French immersion parents to the benefit of the children, the program and the school?

## The Benefits of Involving Parents as Partners in Their Children's Education

a

Parental involvement in their children's education is about more than sitting on the school council, organizing a lunch program and fundraising. While these are important contributions, the expectations, behaviours and attitudes children learn and experience at home and the encouragement and support of their parents are key to their success. This is the form of involvement that makes parents true partners in their children's education.

Children spend only a small proportion of their total waking hours (less than 20 percent) in the classroom. The first thing parents need to understand about their role in their children's education then is that what their children do at home and in the community and how they, as parents, shape and react to



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those experiences are vital to their children's learning and success in school. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 48–50.)

Peter Coleman, a professor at Simon Fraser University with 35 years of experience in education and the author of *Learning About Schools,* says: "Parental involvement in various kinds of children's learning is a much stronger predictor of high levels of achievement than anything we know of." (Quoted in Judy Gibson and Peggy Nicholson, "Partnerships: Supporting and working with Parents." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report, 1999.)*

In her review of 35 years of research into French immersion for the 1998 *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future* conference, Dr. Nancy Halsall wrote: "Positive parental attitudes and beliefs towards immersion have been found to be instrumental in whether students enter immersion and whether they stay in the program." ("French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report, 1999.)*

"When all of the family characteristics examined were considered together in a multiple regression analysis, parental socio-economic status, the number of books in the home and family educational support emerged as important factors related to student achievement in reading, science and mathematics in virtually all countries and provinces. Participation in cultural activities, and parental academic interest also continued to be strongly related to student performance in reading and science, particularly among Canadian provinces." —Patrick Bussière, Fernando Cartwright, Robert Crocker, Xin Ma, Jillian Oderkirk, and Yanhong Zhang, *Measuring Up: The Performance of Canada's Youth in Reading, Mathematics and Science*, 2001, p.36.

But for many parents, the expectation that they be involved in their children's education creates additional pressures on family life. How, for example, do single parents or families with two working parents find the time to be involved?

Parents need the assurance that they can contribute to their children's learning through everyday activities such as reading with their children, cooking or gardening together, assigning and supervising household chores, a trip to the zoo, reading bedtime stories, or discussing a TV program or newspaper article together. On the other hand, administrators and teachers should be aware that most parents have not had the benefit of the formal study of child development, or training in how to talk to, educate and encourage children, as have educators. Parents need help to understand how they can use everyday activities at home to reinforce and complement the curriculum. They need specific directions and examples. They also need some basic knowledge, skills and attitudes. And immersion parents have some specific needs related to the second language learning process and their inability to understand French.

The following sections (b through f) have been adapted from Judy Gibson and Peggy Nicholson, "Partnerships: Supporting and Working with Parents," *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report*, 1999. They are included here to provide administrators with a deeper understanding of parents' needs, the benefits of parental involvement and what steps can be taken to better guide, support and work with parents.


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## The Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes All Parents Need to be Most Effective in Supporting Their Children's Education

b

| KNOWLEDGE | SKILLS | ATTITUDES |
|---|---|---|
| All parents need to know:<br><br>• that they are always welcome at the school<br>• the system (the expectations, codes, who to see for what, etc.)<br>• how to be an effective volunteer<br>• the curriculum/program*<br>• their child's basic needs and their child's abilities (realistic expectations)<br>• the school philosophy, goals, teachers, etc.<br>• the learning expectations for their child's grade*<br>• their child's peer group<br>• how their child is feeling | All parents need the following skills:<br><br>• effective communication skills: listening and speaking both with the child and the school<br>• a "common sense" approach towards education<br>• planning and time-management skills to support learning<br>• organizational and problem-solving skills<br><br>They also need to:<br>• provide time for learning<br>• provide for their child's basic needs<br>• support their child | Parents need:<br><br>• to value education, their school and their child<br>• the "right" motive: to be constructive, positive, respectful, tolerant<br>• realistic expectations<br>• patience<br>• to be supportive of learning<br>• to want what is educationally best for the child—all children<br>• to show an interest in what their child is doing/learning<br>• to feel free to present concerns to educators |

*Alberta Learning's curriculum handbooks for parents are an excellent source of this information.




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## C The Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes French Immersion Parents Need to be Most Effective in Supporting Their Children's Education

| KNOWLEDGE | SKILLS | ATTITUDES |
|---|---|---|
| Immersion parents also need to know:<br>• how second language learning works: the process and timing, particularly at the entry level<br>• the big picture: our understanding of second language learning is constantly changing and skills and attitudes are crucial<br>• the benefits of the program | Immersion parents need:<br>• good communication skills: often teacher and parent have different first languages and experiences<br>• strategies for helping their child learn (when the language of instruction is different from their own)<br>• to develop a positive working rapport with the teachers | Immersion parents need to:<br>• be open-minded<br>• believe in, support and value French<br>• be patient with things such as lag-time in English language arts<br>• have confidence in their child's learning (They need a lot of information about French immersion and to know that learning multiple languages is normal in much of the world.)<br>• be open about learning some French themselves<br>• believe in the philosophy of a bilingual country: Canadian culture and history<br>• appreciate the benefits of the program<br>• trust the school and the teachers<br>• feel free and welcome to communicate with the school as issues arise. Immersion parents need reassurance that their lack of understanding of the language or the program will not be a barrier to home-school communication. |

Consider telephoning immersion parents to find out how they feel things are going.


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## The Benefits to Students, Parents, Teachers and Administrators of Involving Parents as Effective and Meaningful Partners in Their Children's Education

d

| BENEFITS FOR THE STUDENTS | BENEFITS FOR THE PARENTS |
|---|---|
| • have more support<br>• feel valued and cared for—improved self-esteem<br>• develop as a healthy, whole child<br>• are more successful<br>• program is enhanced<br>• increased learning: more than one expert/resource person, smaller group instruction possible, better focus, more time on task<br>• structure of learning extends beyond the classroom<br>• trust<br>• role models<br>• pride in parents<br>• security<br>• value education more highly<br>• share vision<br>• better attitudes towards learning | • greater awareness<br>• greater confidence<br>• pride through involvement<br>• feel like a partner<br>• part of the "group"<br>• opportunities to voice opinions and to be involved in decisions<br>• stronger parent/child relationship<br>• get to know their children's peers, and their children better<br>• less volunteer burnout<br>• personal growth<br>• professional development<br>• ownership of decisions<br>• peace of mind<br>• shared vision<br>• increased knowledge<br>• feel rewarded |
| **BENEFITS FOR THE TEACHERS** | **BENEFITS FOR THE ADMINISTRATOR** |
| • feel supported<br>• greater success<br>• the assistance of volunteers<br>• better two-way communication<br>• parents' perspective adds to the big picture —better insights<br>• greater cooperation<br>• increased resources, expertise<br>• less burnout and frustration<br>• shared vision<br>• access to a pool of expertise | • more program support<br>• happier teachers = happier principal<br>• greater school/program success<br>• sense of teamwork, mutual trust, better overall climate<br>• easier to initiate change<br>• commitment from everyone<br>• good public relations for the school and good support from the community, board and government through parent advocacy<br>• more sources of advice<br>• shared vision and workload<br>• increased enrolment and funding through word-of-mouth and parent advocacy |



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## e The Tools and Strategies That Can Be Used to Help All Parents Acquire the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes They Need

**TOOLS**

- newsletters, curriculum newsletters
- Web site and E-mail
- parent information meetings
- open houses
- study skills workshops for parents
- parents' meetings to explain the curriculum
- French courses for parents
- special school cultural events
- parent library
- curriculum handbooks and other resources for parents

**STRATEGIES**

- clarify roles of parents and teachers in school
- establish clear guidelines for professionalism and confidentiality in working with students
- ensure that staff understand why involving parents is beneficial
- establish a welcoming atmosphere and facility
- invite parents to be involved in the School Improvement Plan
- use different forms of media to inform parents
- provide opportunities for volunteering
- show parents they are appreciated
- ensure that parent activities are flexible
- provide fun and relaxing activities that parents can come to
- take staff out into the community for activities with parents
- invite parents to come into the school for a variety of activities, e.g., speakers, projects

## f Specific Strategies to Address Immersion Parents' Needs

Home-school communication is a key ingredient of all successful school programs. Such communication is even more important for a French immersion program, since few parents understand and are aware of all aspects of immersion education. The following suggestions from experienced French immersion administrators may help you to address these parents' needs.

### Understanding the Curriculum and Teaching Strategies

Be sure parents know about Alberta Learning's curriculum handbooks and encourage them to obtain and read them. Have copies in the parent resource


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collection (see pages 90–91). These handbooks include specific information on the immersion program and French language arts. These handbooks can also be downloaded free from Alberta Learning's Web site <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/parents/>.

Encourage teachers to offer parent sessions on understanding the curriculum and encourage their use of the curriculum handbooks in developing these sessions.

Encourage teachers to offer parent sessions to explain teaching strategies. For early immersion this may include second language learning, reading, writing, the transition to English language arts, and mathematics. For late immersion this may include second language strategies and skills in all subjects areas.

Include parent-friendly curriculum statements in report cards.

Encourage good teacher-parent communication.

Encourage parents to volunteer in the school. Being in the school exposes them to curriculum and teaching, helping to improve their understanding.

### Understanding Achievement Testing and Diploma Exams as They Relate to French Immersion

Provide immersion parents with information on the Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations as you would English parents, explaining their purpose, their relevance to the program, and how the results are used. Offer additional information for immersion parents, such as how the French version of the Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations are developed. Tell them that Achievements Tests are written in the language in which the particular subject is taught and that immersion students have the choice of writing their Diploma Examinations in either French or English.

Provide information on the results of Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations. Immersion parents will need the reassurance that immersion students' results compare favourably with those of English program student results in all subject areas, including English Language Arts at all tested grade levels: 3, 6 and 9.

**For More Information** fmi

Brackenbury, Jim. "Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams: Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 147–160.
(See Appendix C.)



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Gibson, Judy, and Peggy Nicholson. "Partnerships: Supporting and Working with Parents." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future 1998—Conference Report*. Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.

Parents need information about the program itself:

- program goals and realistic expectations
- how immersion works
- the effect on English and other subject areas
- what happens if their child experiences difficulties
- staff qualifications, such as fluency in French, subject area knowledge, etc.
- how to prepare their child for Kindergarten
- practical concerns such as busing, fees, lunchroom supervision, etc.
- how they can help with homework and support their child's learning
- what happens in junior and senior high
- where they can get more information and support

## Understanding the French Immersion Program

Encourage parents to obtain Alberta Learning's *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents* and use it as a resource at home. Include excerpts in your school newsletters, on your Web page, and include several copies in the parent resource collection. (See page 91 for ordering information.)

Offer information sessions for parents such as a panel presentation that includes an administrator, a teacher, a student and a parent, and hold parent discussion forums around the various chapters of *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents* or other topics of interest to parents. Encourage parents to share their "immersion parenting" experiences, challenges and strategies with each other.

Encourage parents to join Canadian Parents for French (CPF) to obtain further and developing information about French second language learning, French resources and out-of-school opportunities and to benefit from the support of other parents. (The school can also join CPF as an associate member to receive newsletters and other publications of interest to parents, which can be added to the parent resource collection.)

Encourage parents to visit a French immersion classroom to see, first-hand, how easily the students adapt to the immersion environment and learn the language. These visits are especially helpful prior to registration in either the early or late immersion program.

## How to Help with Homework: The Parent's Role

**Parents Can Help with Homework in Any Language**

"Regardless of the language in which your child is learning, you can help him develop habits which will be vital to his success both now and throughout his life." *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents*, pp. 50–61, goes on to give concrete examples of what immersion parents can do, from establishing a place to study and providing supplies, to helping with *la dictée* and mathematics.

Because most immersion parents are not proficient in French, French immersion teachers need to understand that parents cannot be expected to help with French skills such as reading and editing.

*Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents* is an excellent resource for parents. Of course, teachers will also have ideas and suggestions to add. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 48–65, 68–78 and 89–94.)

The school can help by publishing good parenting articles in school newsletters, and sending home curriculum newsletters from the teachers, including examples of activities parents can initiate to support and complement classroom learning. An organizational skills workshop for parents may also help them help their children. To complement this, teachers should ensure that students are prepared for homework (e.g., that they have the background knowledge and material). Finally, school homework policies should be explained in the school handbook and shared with parents.

A survey to determine parents' needs with regards to helping with homework will often assist the school to focus their information and support.

Different communication channels can be used. Establish a Web site, for example, with links to school information, learning resources and a homework bulletin board on which teachers can post homework. E-mail can also be used to let parents know about homework assignments. A homework telephone hotline is another way to provide assistance to parents and students.

### Helping in the Classroom or School

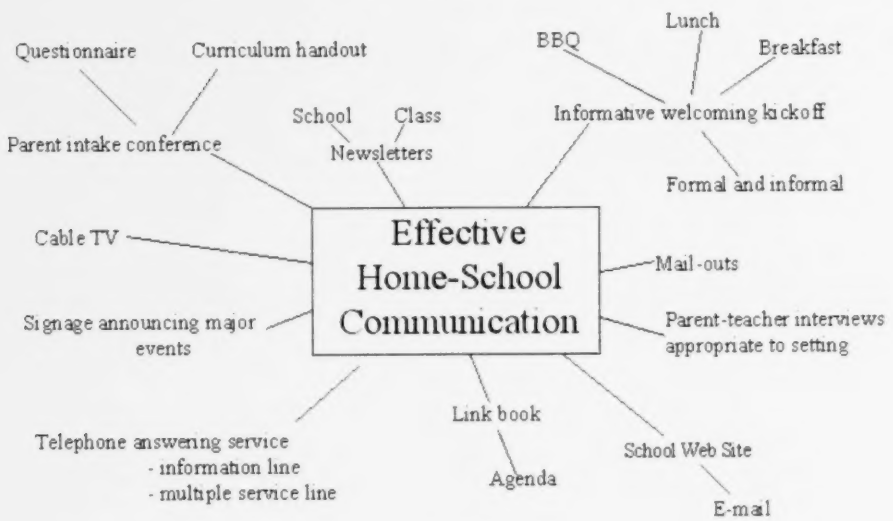
Help teachers understand and accept the benefits of parental involvement in the classroom. Parents with some proficiency in French can be encouraged to

- assist students with reading and other language activities suited to the parent's level of French proficiency,
- assist students with mathematics, social studies, art and science projects, or
- be a guest speaker.

Parents with little or no proficiency in French can be encouraged to

- help with classroom activities that require little oral communication in French;
- supervise on field trips, with the understanding that their role is as an observer in French language learning situations;
- prepare materials; or
- arrange for demonstrations, or guest speakers.

### Means for Effective Home-School Communication



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Administrators should be aware that misunderstandings can occur between two people of the same language group. When one of the parties is using their second language to communicate, as in the case of a francophone teacher speaking with or writing to an anglophone parent, there is an even greater chance of misunderstanding. Be prepared, as an administrator, to provide assistance with nuances in meaning, where possible by enlisting the help of a fully bilingual individual. If difficulties arise, check first for possible communication misunderstandings and provide assistance to help to clear up any confusion related to language.

## Resources for Parents

In recent years, due to the increasing recognition of the important role parents play in their children's education, there has been a growth in the information available to parents wishing to actively support their children's education.

Remember: Not every parent has access to the Internet nor the computer savvy needed to search the Internet, download files, etc. These parents need access to "hard copy" or assistance with the computer and Internet.

A parent resource collection, either in the school library or in the parent volunteer room, can now offer a range of such resources. In schools offering a French immersion program, attention should be paid to including specific resources to inform and assist immersion parents.

Parents should also be encouraged and assisted to obtain resources for home use. *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents* includes a useful section on French reference material. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 56–57.) The Learning Resource Centre has a variety of materials of help to administrators and teachers working with parents. On the Internet, go to <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca> and search on "parents." Here you will also find many of the parent resources listed below.

There is also helpful parent information on the Alberta Learning Web site at <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/parent.asp>. Following are just a few of the many resources now available to immersion parents.

Alberta Learning. *French Immersion Kindergarten: A Handbook for Parents.* Edmonton: Alberta Learning. (LRC #434902)

Alberta Learning. *Kindergarten in Alberta: A Handbook for Parents.* Edmonton: Alberta Learning. (Available from the LRC at <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca>, search under "parents", also available to download at no cost from <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/parent.asp>.)

Alberta Learning. *Curriculum Handbook for Parents.* Edmonton: Alberta Learning. (Separate booklets for grades 1 through 9, as well as a Catholic school version, are available from the LRC at <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca>, search under "parents", also available to download at no cost from <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/parent.asp>.)


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Alberta Learning. *Curriculum Handbook for Parents (Senior High School)*. Edmonton: Alberta Learning. (Available from the LRC at <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca>, search under "parents", also available to download at no cost from <www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/parent.asp>.)

Alberta Learning. *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for Immersion Parents*. Revised Edition. Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002. This book is an excellent resource for immersion parents at any level. Topics include how immersion works, how to help with homework, assisting with reading and writing, the secondary years and French outside of school, with a wealth of ideas and resources. (LRC #479693)

*What do I want for my child?/Qu'est-ce que je veux pour mon enfant?* Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2000: a joint publication of Canadian Parents for French—Alberta Branch, Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, and Alberta Learning. A brochure describing the different French program streams offered in Alberta and how to choose. Available by contacting any of the above groups or online at <cpfalta.ab.ca>. (See Chapter 11.)

Alberta Learning. *Language Learning for French Immersion Students in the Transition Year: Information for Parents*. Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 1992. (LRC #190786)

Alberta Learning. *Parent Guide to Provincial Achievement Testing*. Edmonton: Alberta Learning. Versions for Grades, 3, 6, and 9. (Sent to schools each year by the Learner Assessment Branch.)

Alberta Education. *Working Together in Mathematics Education*. Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1996. (Document to be updated and made available for September 2003.)

*CPF National News* and *CPF Alberta News*, each published four times a year for members of Canadian Parents for French. (See Chapter 11, pages 141–142).

CPF also has a number of other excellent resources for parents, including pamphlets, videos, learning resources and information on French resources and activities. Check their Web sites at <www.cpfalta.ab.ca> or <www.cpf.ca>. (See Chapter 11, pages 141–142.)

The federal department of Canadian Heritage offers a wealth of information on its Web site at <www.pch.gc.ca>.

In addition, school jurisdictions and schools offering French immersion programs sometimes provide valuable information for parents on their Web sites.



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## References

Bussière, Patrick, Fernando Cartwright, Robert Crocker, Xin Ma, Jillian Oderkirk, and Yanhong Zhang. *Measuring Up: The Performance of Canada's Youth in Reading, Mathematics and Science.* Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 2001.

*French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.

Gibson, Judy, and Peggy Nicholson. "Partnerships: Supporting and Working with Parents." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.


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# 7 Enrolments: Figures, Trends and Listing

## Alberta Enrolments

### Funded French Language Program Enrolments 1988–2002

a

#### French Immersion

| | 88–89 | 89–90 | 90–91 | 91–92 | 92–93 | 93–94 | 94–95 | 95–96 | 96–97 | 97–98 | 98–99 | 99–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 4,279 | 3,935 | 3,562 | 3,202 | 3,145 | 3,088 | 2,805 | 2,770 | 2,707 | 2,801 | 2,788 | 2,688 | 2,952 | 2,922 |
| 1 | 3,714 | 3,890 | 3,641 | 3,335 | 3,111 | 3,120 | 3,040 | 2,742 | 2,853 | 2,701 | 2,856 | 2,842 | 2,832 | 3,138 |
| 2 | 3,194 | 3,215 | 3,310 | 3,220 | 3,034 | 2,832 | 2,818 | 2,671 | 2,530 | 2,512 | 2,517 | 2,604 | 2,528 | 2,644 |
| 3 | 2,728 | 2,887 | 2,990 | 3,056 | 3,033 | 2,846 | 2,665 | 2,527 | 2,600 | 2,346 | 2,362 | 2,349 | 2,414 | 2,409 |
| 4 | 2,298 | 2,524 | 2,700 | 2,769 | 2,840 | 2,817 | 2,669 | 2,369 | 2,422 | 2,309 | 2,197 | 2,203 | 2,155 | 2,324 |
| 5 | 1,981 | 2,187 | 2,369 | 2,546 | 2,640 | 2,684 | 2,671 | 2,403 | 2,338 | 2,138 | 2,207 | 2,067 | 2,068 | 2,061 |
| 6 | 1,747 | 1,855 | 2,053 | 2,258 | 2,425 | 2,493 | 2,624 | 2,470 | 2,363 | 2,138 | 2,155 | 2,130 | 1,970 | 2,020 |
| 7 | 1,819 | 1,829 | 2,036 | 2,138 | 2,318 | 2,366 | 2,647 | 2,524 | 2,498 | 2,302 | 2,239 | 2,382 | 2,402 | 2,445 |
| 8 | 1,477 | 1,614 | 1,696 | 1,859 | 1,954 | 2,085 | 2,388 | 2,381 | 2,281 | 2,332 | 2,173 | 2,126 | 2,202 | 2,230 |
| 9 | 1,107 | 1,277 | 1,479 | 1,523 | 1,666 | 1,814 | 2,059 | 2,050 | 2,119 | 2,009 | 2,101 | 1,917 | 1,866 | 1,971 |
| 10 | 544 | 621 | 688 | 756 | 826 | 888 | 943 | 938 | 1,260 | 1,139 | 1,267 | 1,418 | 1,357 | 1,322 |
| 11 | 419 | 480 | 513 | 557 | 653 | 706 | 843 | 676 | 701 | 841 | 1,079 | 1,116 | 1,262 | 1,181 |
| 12 | 227 | 371 | 424 | 441 | 523 | 568 | 630 | 554 | 540 | 653 | 865 | 940 | 958 | 1,048 |
| Totals | 25,534 | 26,685 | 27,461 | 27,660 | 28,168 | 28,307 | 28,802 | 27,075 | 27,212 | 26,221 | 26,826 | 26,782 | 26,966 | 27,715 |

#### Francophone

| | 88–89 | 89–90 | 90–91 | 91–92 | 92–93 | 93–94 | 94–95 | 95–96 | 96–97 | 97–98 | 98–99 | 99–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 208 | 274 | 261 | 228 | 297 | 243 | 267 | 332 | 305 | 348 | 397 | 378 | 405 | 329 |
| 1 | 228 | 266 | 272 | 257 | 249 | 301 | 265 | 315 | 339 | 339 | 370 | 407 | 373 | 349 |
| 2 | 184 | 253 | 276 | 253 | 265 | 255 | 285 | 285 | 300 | 346 | 362 | 355 | 394 | 328 |
| 3 | 188 | 205 | 252 | 271 | 269 | 284 | 250 | 311 | 273 | 331 | 379 | 354 | 354 | 324 |
| 4 | 187 | 212 | 229 | 233 | 268 | 268 | 273 | 271 | 302 | 289 | 328 | 365 | 348 | 306 |
| 5 | 169 | 213 | 215 | 216 | 246 | 264 | 250 | 313 | 255 | 311 | 310 | 324 | 353 | 275 |
| 6 | 171 | 202 | 222 | 198 | 234 | 240 | 235 | 268 | 302 | 268 | 323 | 307 | 314 | 284 |
| 7 | 150 | 184 | 189 | 210 | 178 | 211 | 202 | 250 | 222 | 290 | 248 | 293 | 287 | 242 |
| 8 | 153 | 175 | 175 | 178 | 203 | 184 | 192 | 207 | 214 | 229 | 268 | 238 | 275 | 226 |
| 9 | 125 | 153 | 165 | 166 | 162 | 194 | 165 | 183 | 158 | 215 | 222 | 248 | 198 | 202 |
| 10 | 121 | 102 | 120 | 138 | 163 | 153 | 150 | 125 | 143 | 163 | 155 | 156 | 147 | 122 |
| 11 | 82 | 78 | 96 | 113 | 129 | 138 | 119 | 110 | 84 | 115 | 123 | 130 | 138 | 117 |
| 12 | 72 | 66 | 64 | 79 | 111 | 143 | 111 | 99 | 98 | 86 | 103 | 112 | 131 | 114 |
| Totals | 2,038 | 2,383 | 2,536 | 2,540 | 2,774 | 2,878 | 2,764 | 3,069 | 2,995 | 3,330 | 3,588 | 3,667 | 3,717 | 3,218 |



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# 7 Enrolments: Figures, Trends and Listing

## Alberta Enrolments

### Funded French Language Program Enrolments 1988–2002

a

#### French Immersion

| | 88–89 | 89–90 | 90–91 | 91–92 | 92–93 | 93–94 | 94–95 | 95–96 | 96–97 | 97–98 | 98–99 | 99–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 4,279 | 3,935 | 3,562 | 3,202 | 3,145 | 3,088 | 2,805 | 2,770 | 2,707 | 2,801 | 2,788 | 2,688 | 2,952 | 2,922 |
| 1 | 3,714 | 3,890 | 3,641 | 3,335 | 3,111 | 3,120 | 3,040 | 2,742 | 2,853 | 2,701 | 2,856 | 2,842 | 2,832 | 3,138 |
| 2 | 3,194 | 3,215 | 3,310 | 3,220 | 3,034 | 2,832 | 2,818 | 2,671 | 2,530 | 2,512 | 2,517 | 2,604 | 2,528 | 2,644 |
| 3 | 2,728 | 2,887 | 2,990 | 3,056 | 3,033 | 2,846 | 2,665 | 2,527 | 2,600 | 2,346 | 2,362 | 2,349 | 2,414 | 2,409 |
| 4 | 2,298 | 2,524 | 2,700 | 2,769 | 2,840 | 2,817 | 2,669 | 2,369 | 2,422 | 2,309 | 2,197 | 2,203 | 2,155 | 2,324 |
| 5 | 1,981 | 2,187 | 2,369 | 2,546 | 2,640 | 2,684 | 2,671 | 2,403 | 2,338 | 2,138 | 2,207 | 2,067 | 2,068 | 2,061 |
| 6 | 1,747 | 1,855 | 2,053 | 2,258 | 2,425 | 2,493 | 2,624 | 2,470 | 2,363 | 2,138 | 2,155 | 2,130 | 1,970 | 2,020 |
| 7 | 1,819 | 1,829 | 2,036 | 2,138 | 2,318 | 2,366 | 2,647 | 2,524 | 2,498 | 2,302 | 2,239 | 2,382 | 2,402 | 2,445 |
| 8 | 1,477 | 1,614 | 1,696 | 1,859 | 1,954 | 2,085 | 2,388 | 2,381 | 2,281 | 2,332 | 2,173 | 2,126 | 2,202 | 2,230 |
| 9 | 1,107 | 1,277 | 1,479 | 1,523 | 1,666 | 1,814 | 2,059 | 2,050 | 2,119 | 2,009 | 2,101 | 1,917 | 1,866 | 1,971 |
| 10 | 544 | 621 | 688 | 756 | 826 | 888 | 943 | 938 | 1,260 | 1,139 | 1,287 | 1,418 | 1,357 | 1,322 |
| 11 | 419 | 480 | 513 | 557 | 653 | 706 | 843 | 676 | 701 | 841 | 1,079 | 1,116 | 1,262 | 1,181 |
| 12 | 227 | 371 | 424 | 441 | 523 | 568 | 630 | 554 | 540 | 653 | 865 | 940 | 958 | 1,048 |
| Totals | 25,534 | 26,685 | 27,461 | 27,660 | 28,168 | 28,307 | 28,802 | 27,075 | 27,212 | 26,221 | 26,826 | 26,782 | 26,966 | 27,715 |

#### Francophone

| | 88–89 | 89–90 | 90–91 | 91–92 | 92–93 | 93–94 | 94–95 | 95–96 | 96–97 | 97–98 | 98–99 | 99–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 208 | 274 | 261 | 228 | 297 | 243 | 267 | 332 | 305 | 348 | 397 | 378 | 405 | 329 |
| 1 | 228 | 266 | 272 | 257 | 249 | 301 | 265 | 315 | 339 | 339 | 370 | 407 | 373 | 349 |
| 2 | 184 | 253 | 276 | 253 | 265 | 255 | 285 | 285 | 300 | 346 | 362 | 355 | 394 | 328 |
| 3 | 188 | 205 | 252 | 271 | 269 | 284 | 250 | 311 | 273 | 331 | 379 | 354 | 354 | 324 |
| 4 | 187 | 212 | 229 | 233 | 268 | 268 | 273 | 271 | 302 | 289 | 328 | 365 | 348 | 306 |
| 5 | 169 | 213 | 215 | 216 | 246 | 264 | 250 | 313 | 255 | 311 | 310 | 324 | 353 | 275 |
| 6 | 171 | 202 | 222 | 198 | 234 | 240 | 235 | 268 | 302 | 268 | 323 | 307 | 314 | 284 |
| 7 | 150 | 184 | 189 | 210 | 178 | 211 | 202 | 250 | 222 | 290 | 248 | 293 | 287 | 242 |
| 8 | 153 | 175 | 175 | 178 | 203 | 184 | 192 | 207 | 214 | 229 | 268 | 238 | 275 | 226 |
| 9 | 125 | 153 | 165 | 166 | 162 | 194 | 165 | 183 | 158 | 215 | 222 | 248 | 198 | 202 |
| 10 | 121 | 102 | 120 | 138 | 163 | 153 | 150 | 125 | 143 | 163 | 155 | 156 | 147 | 122 |
| 11 | 82 | 78 | 96 | 113 | 129 | 138 | 119 | 110 | 84 | 115 | 123 | 130 | 138 | 117 |
| 12 | 72 | 66 | 64 | 79 | 111 | 143 | 111 | 99 | 98 | 86 | 103 | 112 | 131 | 114 |
| Totals | 2,038 | 2,383 | 2,536 | 2,540 | 2,774 | 2,878 | 2,764 | 3,069 | 2,995 | 3,330 | 3,588 | 3,667 | 3,717 | 3,218 |



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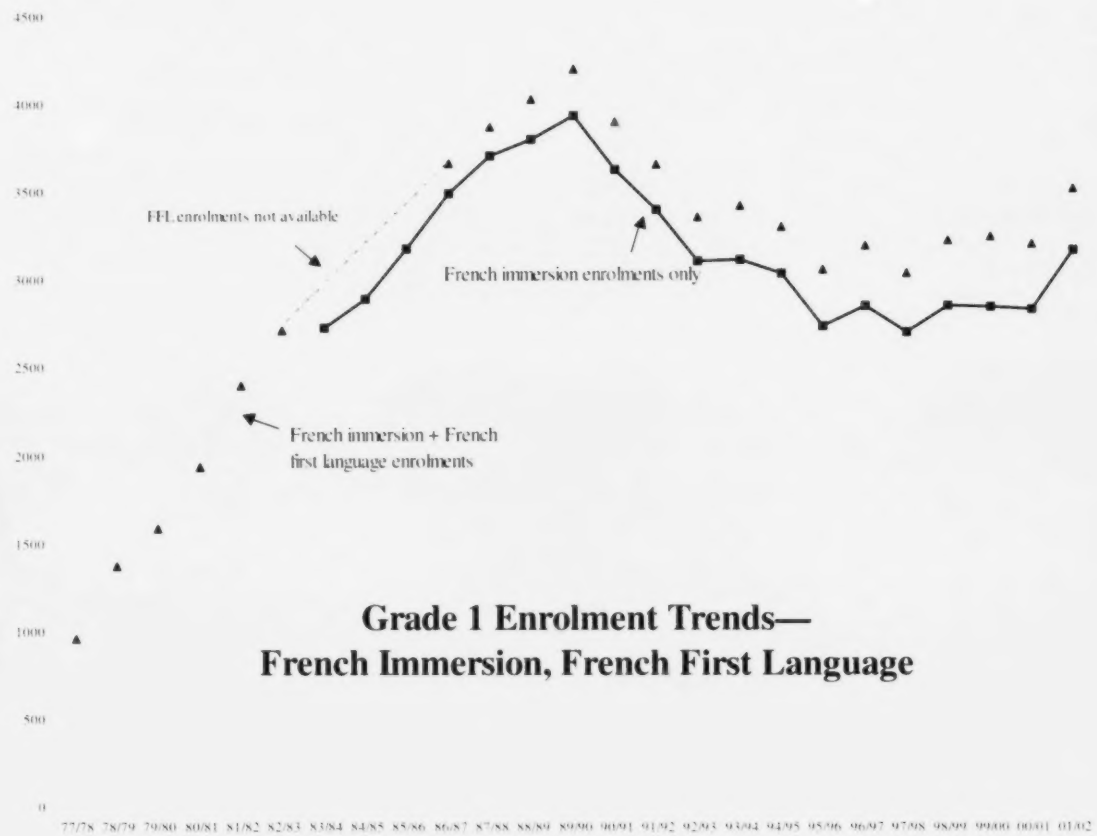
## French as a Second Language (FSL)

| | 88–89 | 89–90 | 90–91 | 91–92 | 92–93 | 93–94 | 94–95 | 95–96 | 96–97 | 97–98 | 98–99 | 99–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | **334** | 356 | 450 | 312 | **522** | 619 | 479 | 305 | **389** | 500 | 184 | 100 | **330** | 469 |
| 1 | 2,288 | **2,016** | 2,068 | 1,920 | 1,987 | **1,828** | 2,281 | 2,138 | 2,082 | **1,846** | 1,079 | 1,401 | 1,807 | **1,757** |
| 2 | 2,497 | 2,597 | **2,521** | 2,589 | 2,236 | 2,148 | **2,325** | 2,154 | 2,291 | 2,094 | **1,261** | 1,705 | 1,972 | 1,895 |
| 3 | 3,543 | 3,497 | 3,590 | **3,592** | 4,228 | 3,958 | 3,969 | **3,391** | 3,268 | 3,054 | 1,846 | **2,569** | 3,033 | 2,861 |
| 4 | **21,435** | 22,280 | 24,576 | 29,715 | **27,228** | 27,974 | 24,742 | 24,558 | **22,468** | 22,242 | 19,728 | 20,300 | **20,398** | 20,052 |
| 5 | 20,615 | **22,597** | 23,419 | 25,111 | 25,960 | **27,187** | 25,322 | 25,343 | 24,022 | **22,641** | 19,783 | 21,201 | 22,189 | **21,007** |
| 6 | 19,952 | 20,837 | **22,621** | 23,952 | 24,836 | 25,989 | **23,943** | 24,716 | 23,918 | 22,814 | **19,488** | 20,188 | 22,080 | 21,607 |
| 7 | 20,683 | 21,815 | 22,110 | **21,001** | 20,942 | 21,340 | 20,459 | **18,886** | 17,907 | 17,069 | 14,360 | **15,263** | 16,295 | 15,824 |
| 8 | **16,255** | 16,814 | 17,185 | 16,841 | **16,717** | 16,653 | 15,360 | 13,786 | **12,408** | 12,029 | 10,808 | 10,972 | **11,432** | 10,997 |
| 9 | 13,156 | **14,317** | 14,602 | 14,302 | 14,545 | **14,412** | 12,694 | 12,010 | 10,406 | **10,347** | 9,133 | 9,193 | 9,328 | **8,748** |
| 10 | 16,277 | 16,763 | **16,270** | 16,191 | 15,200 | 11,594 | **8,844** | 6,535 | 5,225 | 5,028 | **7,147** | 7,154 | 6,961 | 6,803 |
| 11 | 10,889 | 11,900 | 11,585 | **11,788** | 11,469 | 10,998 | 10,887 | **7,609** | 6,772 | 6,499 | 4,399 | **5,253** | 4,911 | 4,766 |
| 12 | **6,280** | 6,408 | 6,754 | 6,273 | **6,508** | 7,757 | 8,393 | 9,163 | **7,468** | 7,089 | 2,031 | 2,834 | **2,796** | 2,656 |
| **Totals** | **154,204** | **162,197** | **167,751** | **173,587** | **172,378** | **172,457** | **159,698** | **150,594** | **138,624** | **133,252** | **111,247** | **118,133** | **123,532** | **119,442** |

Notes: Figures from 1992/93–1995/96 are September 30 enrolment counts.
Figures from 1996/97–2001/02 are actual enrolments.

Source: Alberta Learning

## Grade 1 Enrolment Trends—French Immersion, French First Language




Grade 1 Enrolment Trends—
French Immersion, French First Language

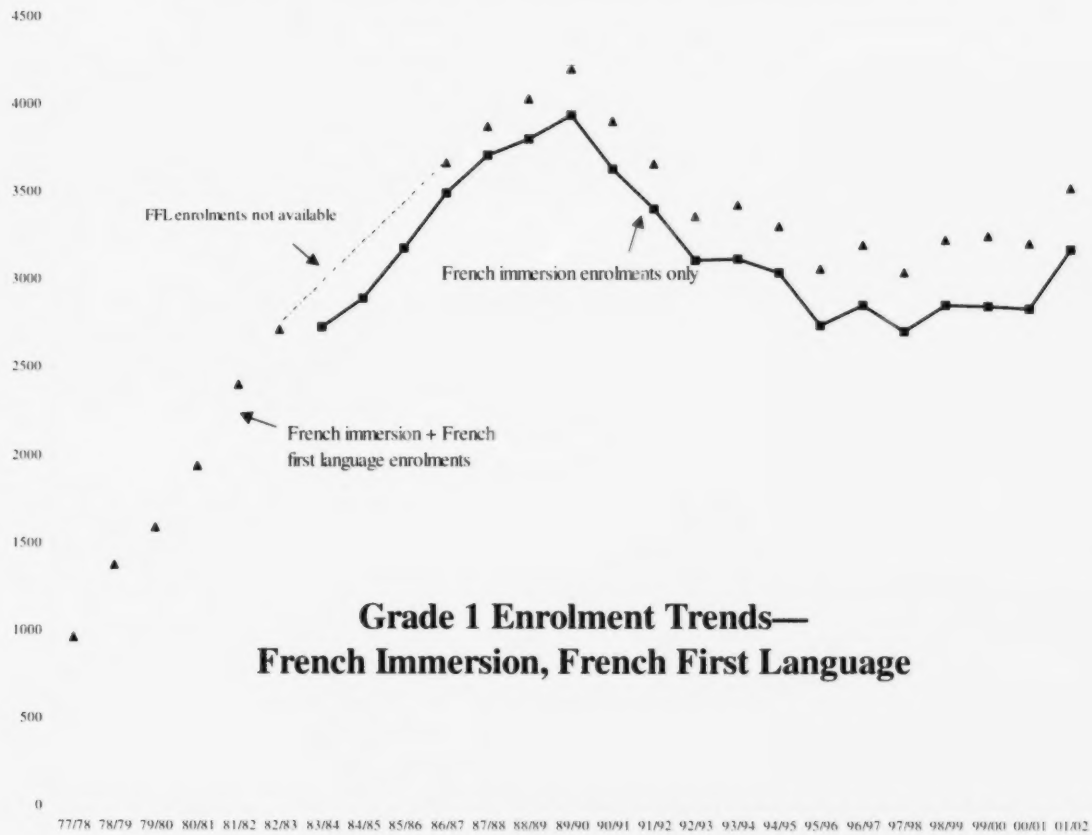
## French as a Second Language (FSL)

| | 88–89 | 89–90 | 90–91 | 91–92 | 92–93 | 93–94 | 94–95 | 95–96 | 96–97 | 97–98 | 98–99 | 99–2000 | 2000–01 | 2001–02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | 334 | 356 | 450 | 312 | 522 | 619 | 479 | 305 | 389 | 500 | 184 | 100 | 330 | 469 |
| 1 | 2,288 | 2,016 | 2,068 | 1,920 | 1,987 | 1,828 | 2,281 | 2,138 | 2,082 | 1,846 | 1,079 | 1,401 | 1,807 | 1,757 |
| 2 | 2,497 | 2,597 | 2,521 | 2,589 | 2,236 | 2,148 | 2,325 | 2,154 | 2,291 | 2,094 | 1,261 | 1,705 | 1,972 | 1,895 |
| 3 | 3,543 | 3,497 | 3,590 | 3,592 | 4,228 | 3,958 | 3,969 | 3,391 | 3,268 | 3,054 | 1,846 | 2,569 | 3,033 | 2,861 |
| 4 | 21,435 | 22,280 | 24,576 | 29,715 | 27,228 | 27,974 | 24,742 | 24,558 | 22,468 | 22,242 | 19,728 | 20,300 | 20,398 | 20,052 |
| 5 | 20,615 | 22,597 | 23,419 | 25,111 | 25,960 | 27,187 | 25,322 | 25,343 | 24,022 | 22,641 | 19,783 | 21,201 | 22,189 | 21,007 |
| 6 | 19,952 | 20,837 | 22,621 | 23,952 | 24,836 | 25,989 | 23,943 | 24,716 | 23,918 | 22,814 | 19,488 | 20,188 | 22,080 | 21,607 |
| 7 | 20,683 | 21,815 | 22,110 | 21,001 | 20,942 | 21,340 | 20,459 | 18,886 | 17,907 | 17,069 | 14,360 | 15,263 | 16,295 | 15,824 |
| 8 | 16,255 | 16,814 | 17,185 | 16,841 | 16,717 | 16,653 | 15,360 | 13,786 | 12,408 | 12,029 | 10,808 | 10,972 | 11,432 | 10,997 |
| 9 | 13,156 | 14,317 | 14,602 | 14,302 | 14,545 | 14,412 | 12,694 | 12,010 | 10,406 | 10,347 | 9,133 | 9,193 | 9,328 | 8,748 |
| 10 | 16,277 | 16,763 | 16,270 | 16,191 | 15,200 | 11,594 | 8,844 | 6,535 | 5,225 | 5,028 | 7,147 | 7,154 | 6,961 | 6,803 |
| 11 | 10,889 | 11,900 | 11,585 | 11,788 | 11,469 | 10,998 | 10,887 | 7,609 | 6,772 | 6,499 | 4,399 | 5,253 | 4,911 | 4,766 |
| 12 | 6,280 | 6,408 | 6,754 | 6,273 | 6,508 | 7,757 | 8,393 | 9,163 | 7,468 | 7,089 | 2,031 | 2,834 | 2,796 | 2,656 |
| Totals | 154,204 | 162,197 | 167,751 | 173,587 | 172,378 | 172,457 | 159,698 | 150,594 | 138,624 | 133,252 | 111,247 | 118,133 | 123,532 | 119,442 |

Notes: Figures from 1992/93–1995/96 are September 30 enrolment counts.
Figures from 1996/97–2001/02 are actual enrolments.

Source: Alberta Learning

## Grade 1 Enrolment Trends—French Immersion, French First Language




Grade 1 Enrolment Trends—
French Immersion, French First Language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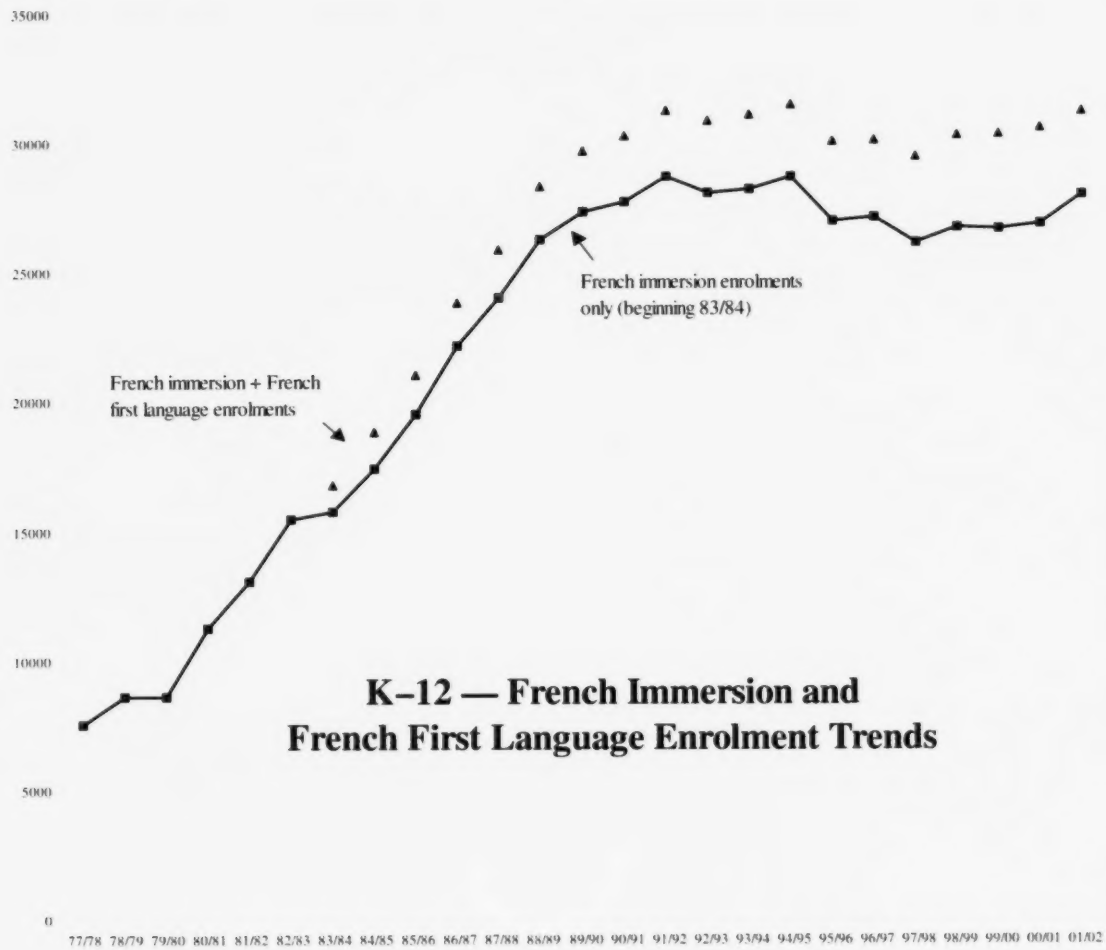
## K–12 French Immersion and French First Language Enrolment Trends




**K–12 — French Immersion and French First Language Enrolment Trends**





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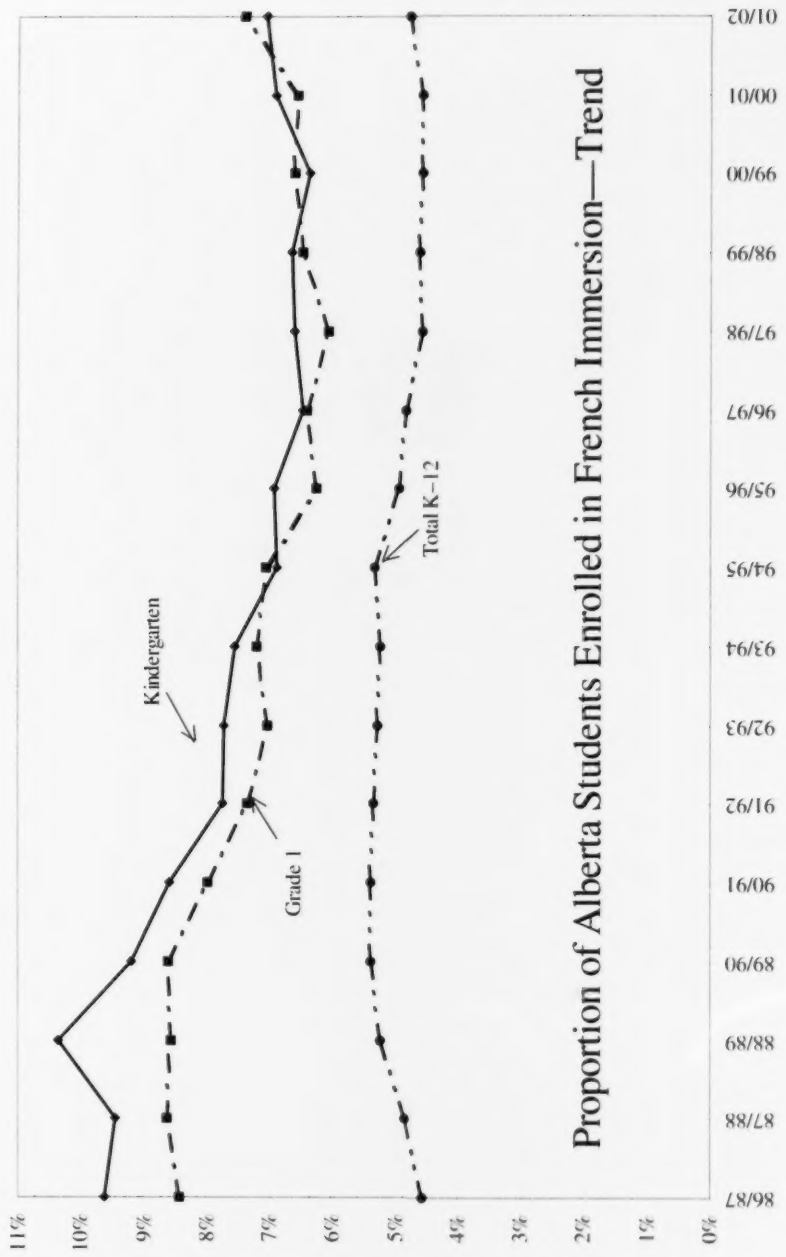
## Proportion of Alberta Students Enrolled in French Immersion–Trend





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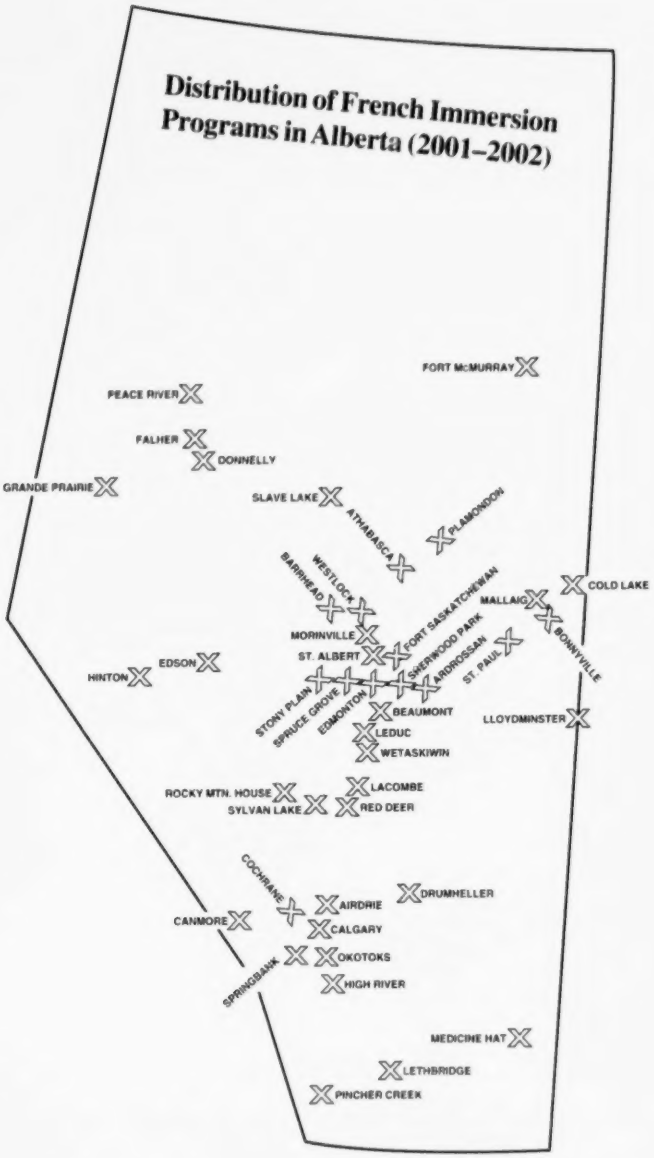
## Distribution of French Immersion Programs in Alberta



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## Canada-wide Enrolments

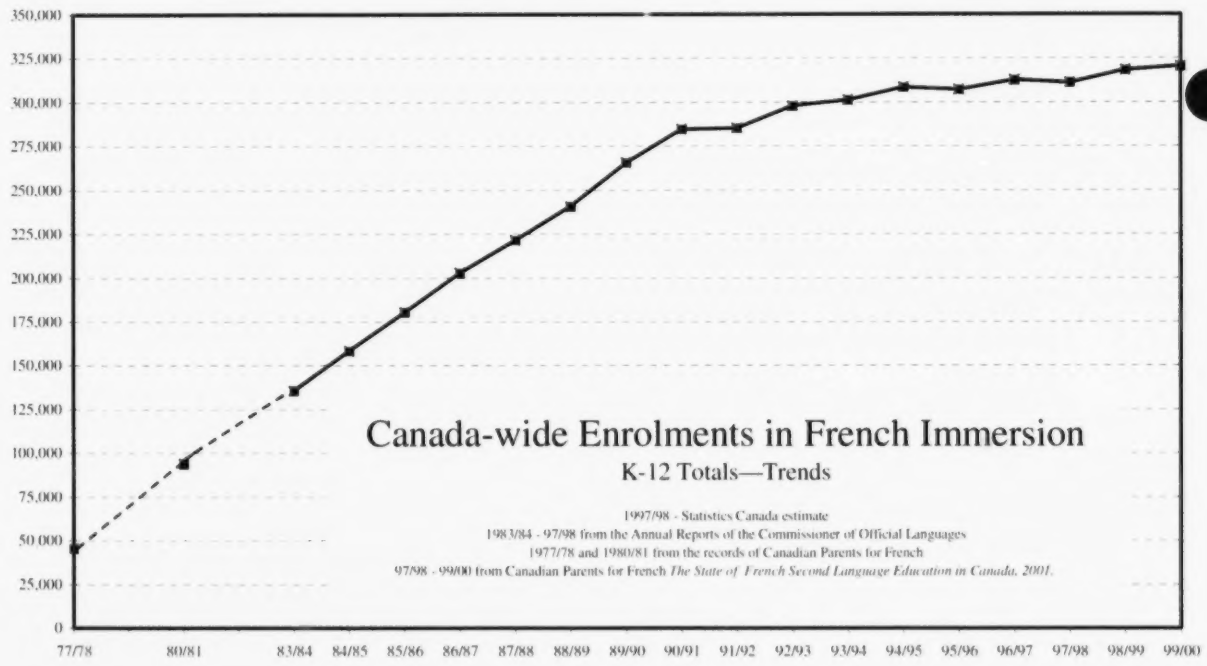
### b French Immersion Enrolments, by Province and Territory, 1991–2000

**FRENCH IMMERSION ENROLMENTS, BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY, 1991–2000**

| Year | AB* | BC | MB | NB | NF | NS | NT | ON | PE | QC | SK | YT | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 91–92 | 27,660 | 28,040 | 19,669 | 14,987 | 4,999 | 7,548 | 423 | 150,023 | 3,511 | 32,917 | 10,851 | 391 | **301,019** |
| 92–93 | 28,168 | 28,506 | 19,612 | 16,468 | 4,796 | 8,051 | 438 | 144,019 | 3,065 | 33,341 | 10,960 | 415 | **297,839** |
| 93–94 | 28,307 | 29,174 | 19,198 | 16,204 | 4,539 | 8,975 | 422 | 148,691 | 3,476 | 34,213 | 10,656 | 455 | **304,310** |
| 94–95 | 28,802 | 29,078 | 19,292 | 16,597 | 5,054 | 9,965 | 492 | 146,682 | 3,462 | 35,405 | 10,796 | 440 | **306,065** |
| 95–96 | 27,075 | 29,184 | 19,020 | 16,052 | 5,074 | 10,916 | 480 | 151,026 | 3,385 | 32,756 | 10,404 | 452 | **305,824** |
| 96–97 | 27,212 | 29,924 | 18,674 | 18,363 | 4,615 | 11,599 | 473 | 151,119 | 3,431 | 33,716 | 10,325 | 425 | **309,876** |
| 97–98 | 26,221 | 28,765 | 18,133 | 20,968 | 4,351 | 12,213 | 471 | 148,504 | 3,228 | 37,429 | 9,444 | 425 | **310,152** |
| 98–99 | 26,826 | 28,848 | 17,301 | 20,050 | 4,819 | 12,702 | 557 | 155,907 | 3,472 | 38,360 | 8,923 | 372 | **318,137** |
| 99–00 | 26,782 | 28,752 | 16,947 | 19,867 | 4,637 | 13,620 | 593 | 157,410 | 3,475 | 39,313 | 8,617 | 362 | **320,375** |

Source: Canadian Parents for French. *The State of French Second Language Education in Canada, 2001.*
*Note: Alberta enrolments reflect Alberta Learning figures.

### K-12 Enrolments in French Immersion—Trends



## Canada-wide Enrolments

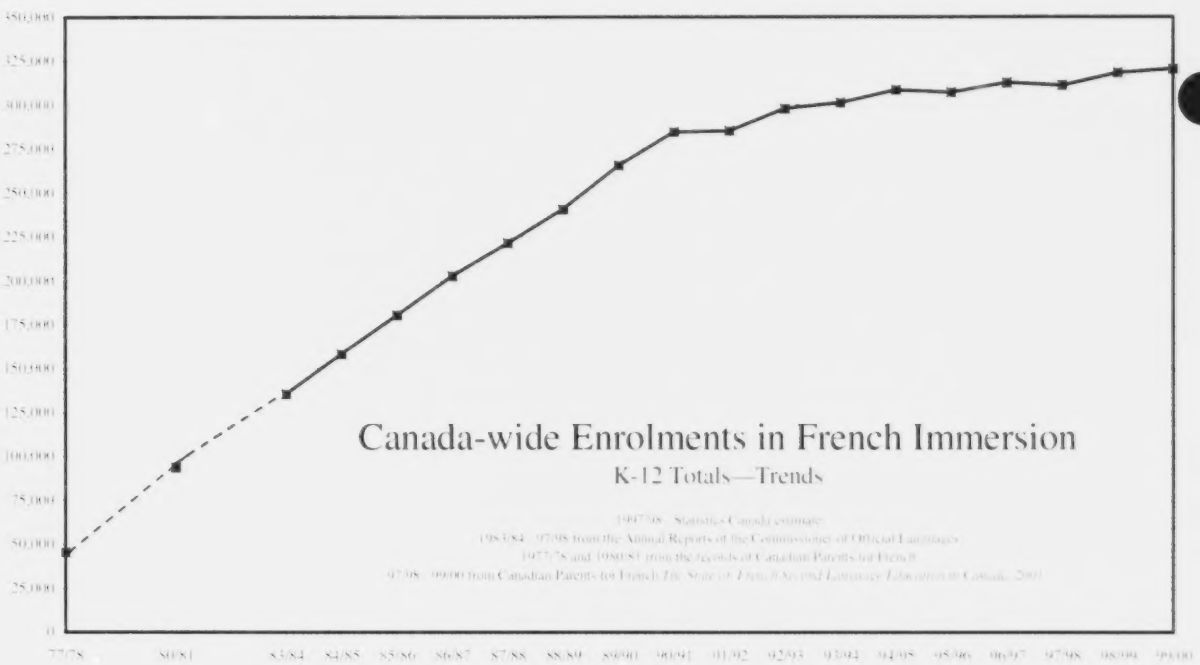
### French Immersion Enrolments, by Province and Territory, 1991–2000

**FRENCH IMMERSION ENROLMENTS, BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY, 1991–2000**

| Year | AB* | BC | MB | NB | NF | NS | NT | ON | PE | QC | SK | YT | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 91–92 | 27,660 | 28,040 | 19,669 | 14,987 | 4,999 | 7,548 | 423 | 150,023 | 3,511 | 32,917 | 10,851 | 391 | **301,019** |
| 92–93 | 28,168 | 28,506 | 19,612 | 16,468 | 4,796 | 8,051 | 438 | 144,019 | 3,065 | 33,341 | 10,960 | 415 | **297,839** |
| 93–94 | 28,307 | 29,174 | 19,198 | 16,204 | 4,539 | 8,975 | 422 | 148,691 | 3,476 | 34,213 | 10,656 | 455 | **304,310** |
| 94–95 | 28,802 | 29,078 | 19,292 | 16,597 | 5,054 | 9,965 | 492 | 146,682 | 3,462 | 35,405 | 10,796 | 440 | **306,065** |
| 95–96 | 27,075 | 29,184 | 19,020 | 16,052 | 5,074 | 10,916 | 480 | 151,026 | 3,385 | 32,756 | 10,404 | 452 | **305,824** |
| 96–97 | 27,212 | 29,924 | 18,674 | 18,363 | 4,615 | 11,599 | 473 | 151,119 | 3,431 | 33,716 | 10,325 | 425 | **309,876** |
| 97–98 | 26,221 | 28,765 | 18,133 | 20,968 | 4,351 | 12,213 | 471 | 148,504 | 3,228 | 37,429 | 9,444 | 425 | **310,152** |
| 98–99 | 26,826 | 28,848 | 17,301 | 20,050 | 4,819 | 12,702 | 557 | 155,907 | 3,472 | 38,360 | 8,923 | 372 | **318,137** |
| 99–00 | 26,782 | 28,752 | 16,947 | 19,867 | 4,637 | 13,620 | 593 | 157,410 | 3,475 | 39,313 | 8,617 | 362 | **320,375** |

Source: Canadian Parents for French, *The State of French Second Language Education in Canada, 2001*.
*Note: Alberta enrolments reflect Alberta Learning figures.

### K-12 Enrolments in French Immersion—Trends



## Distribution of French Immersion Programs, Canada, 2001–2002

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LIST OF ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOLS OFFERING FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS
UNDER SECTION 21 OF THE SCHOOL ACT
2002/2003

| *School Board / School* | *Grades* | *Address* | *City* | *Phone* | *Fax* | *E-mail* | *Web site* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aspen View Regional Division No. 19** | **Gr. K-9** | **3602 - 48 Avenue** | **Athabasca AB T9S 1M8** | **780-675-7080** | **780-675-3660** | **aspenview@aspenview.org** | **www.aspenview.org** |
| Edwin Parr Composite Community School | 8 - 9 | 4510 - 48 Street | Athabasca AB T9S 1H6 | 780-675-2285 | 780-675-3544 | epc@aspenview.org | www.aspenview.org/schools/epc/html |
| Landing Trail Intermediate School | 4 - 7 | 5502 - 48 Avenue | Athabasca AB T9S 1L3 | 780-675-2213 | 780-675-2950 | ltis@aspenview.org | www.aspenview.org/schools/ltis/index.htm |
| Whispering Hills Primary School | ECS - 3 | 3001 Whispering Hills Drive | Athabasca AB T9S 1N3 | 780-675-4546 | 780-675-5090 | whps@aspenview.org | www.aspenview.org/schools/whps/index.htm |
| **Black Gold Regional Division No. 18** | **Gr. K-12** | **1101 - 5 Street, 3rd Floor** | **Nisku AB T9E 7N3** | **780-955-6025** | **780-955-6050** | | **www.blackgold.ab.ca** |
| École Beau Meadow School | ECS - 4 | 4322 - 44 Street | Beaumont AB T4X 1K3 | 780-929-2175 | 780-929-6606 | bmeadow@blackgold.ab.ca | www.blackgold.ab.ca/schools/beaumeadow/homepage.htm |
| École Bellevue School | ECS - 4 | 5103 - 50 Avenue | Beaumont AB T4X 1K4 | 780-929-8663 | 780-929-2168 | bellevue@blackgold.ab.ca | www.blackgold.ab.ca/schools/bellevue/main-pages |
| École Coloniale Estates School | 5 - 8 | 37 Coloniale Way | Beaumont AB T4X 1M7 | 780-929-5904 | 780-929-5907 | | http://www.blackgold.ab.ca/schools/coloniale/SchoolWeb |
| École Corinthia Park School | ECS - 8 | 127 Corinthia Drive | Leduc AB T9E 7J2 | 780-986-8404 | 780-986-8508 | | www.blackgold.ab.ca/schools/corinthiapark |
| École J. E. Lapointe School | 5 - 8 | 4801 - 55 Avenue | Beaumont AB T4X 1K2 | 780-929-5988 | 780-929-5258 | lapointe@blackgold.ab.ca | www.blackgold.ab.ca/schools/lapointe/home.htm |
| École Secondaire Beaumont Composite H. S. | 9 - 12 | 5417 - 43 Avenue | Beaumont AB T4X 1K1 | 780-929-6282 | 780-929-1323 | | www.blackgold.ab.ca/schools/beaumonthigh/index.html |
| ***Calgary French School (Private)*** | ***ECS - 6*** | ***6304 Larkspur Way SW*** | ***Calgary AB T3E 5P7*** | ***403-240-1500*** | ***403-249-5899*** | ***calfren@home.com*** | ***www.cfs.calgary.ab.ca/index.htm*** |
| **Calgary R. C. S. S. D. No. 1** | **Gr. K-12** | **1000 - 5 Avenue SW** | **Calgary AB T2P 4T9** | **403-298-1411** | **403-265-5710** | | **www.cssd.ab.ca** |
| Bishop Grandin High School | 10 | 111 Hadon Road SW | Calgary AB T2V 2Y2 | 403-252-7541 | 403-640-0116 | | |
| École St. Pius X School | ECS - 6 | 2312 - 18 Street NW | Calgary AB T2M 3T5 | 403-220-9556 | 403-289-6554 | | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/stpius/ |
| Holy Name Bilingual School | ECS - 6 | 3011 - 35 Street SW | Calgary AB T3E 2Y7 | 403-242-1591 | 403-246-9385 | | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/holyname/ |
| Holy Redeemer Bilingual School | ECS - 6 | 708 - 47 Street SE | Calgary AB T2A 1P8 | 403-272-0849 | 403-272-0599 | | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/holyredeemer/ |
| Madeleine D'Houet Bilingual School | 7 - 9 | 108 - 22 Street NW | Calgary AB T2N 2M8 | 403-283-5502 | 403-270-7872 | | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/dhouet |
| St. Cecilia Bilingual Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 610 Agate Crescent SE | Calgary AB T2J 0Z3 | 403-255-0266 | 403-255-7043 | | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/stcecilia |
| St. Francis Senior H. S. | 10 - 12 | 877 Northmount Drive NW | Calgary AB T2L 0A3 | 403-289-8471 | 403-284-3084 | st.francis@cssd.ab.ca | www.stfrancishs.net |
| St. Gerard Bilingual School | ECS - 6 | 1204 - 96 Avenue SW | Calgary AB T2V 0Y1 | 403-252-5192 | 403-255-0701 | st.gerard@cssd.ab.ca | www.geocities.com/stgerard.geo |
| St. Luke Bilingual Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 1232 Northmount Drive NW | Calgary AB T2L 0E1 | 403-284-4827 | 403-282-1117 | st.luke@cssd.ab.ca | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/stluke/ |
| St. Martha School | 7 | 6020 4 Avenue NE | Calgary AB T2A 4B1 | 403-273-9670 | 403-272-6210 | | |
| St. Mary's H. S. | 10 - 12 | 111 - 18 Avenue SW | Calgary AB T2S 0B8 | 403-228-5810 | 403-229-9280 | | www.stmaryshs.calgary.ab.ca |
| St. Matthew School | 7 - 9 | 416 - 83 Avenue SE | Calgary AB T2H 1N3 | 403-252-7701 | 403-255-7498 | | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/stmatthew/frames.htm |
| St. Wilfrid Elementary School | ECS - 4 | 4225 - 44 Avenue NE | Calgary AB T1Y 4Y1 | 403-285-4170 | 403-280-4977 | | www.cssd.ab.ca/schools/wilfrid/pages |
| **Calgary School District No. 19** | **Gr. K-12** | **515 MacLeod Trail SE** | **Calgary AB T2G 2L9** | **403-294-8211** | **403-294-8125** | | **www.cbe.ab.ca** |
| Andrew Davison Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 8710 Ancourt Road SE | Calgary AB T2H 1V2 | 403-777-8460 | 403-777-8462 | pnn303@cbe.ab.ca | |
| Banff Trail School (Bilingual) | ECS - 6 | 3232 Cochrane Road NW | Calgary AB T2M 4J3 | 403-777-6120 | 403-777-6122 | srs20201@cbe.ab.ca | |
| Bishop Pinkham School | 7 - 9 | 3304 - 63 Avenue SW | Calgary AB T3E 5K1 | 403-777-7840 | 403-777-7844 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b645 |
| Bob Edwards Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 4424 Marlborough Drive NE | Calgary AB T2A 2Z5 | 403-777-7770 | 403-777-7778 | srs62301@cbe.ab.ca | |
| Branton Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 2103 - 20 Street NW | Calgary AB T2M 3W1 | 403-777-7440 | 403-777-7449 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b621/ |
| Central Memorial H. S. | 10 - 12 | 5111 - 21 Street SW | Calgary AB T3E 1R9 | 403-243-8880 | 403-777-7059 | mainoffice-823@email.cbe.ab.ca | www.cbe.ab.ca/b823 |
| Chinook Park School | ECS - 6 | 1312 - 75 Avenue SW | Calgary AB T2V 0S6 | 403-777-8480 | 403-777-8483 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b306 |
| École King George Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 2108 - 10 Street NW | Calgary AB T2M 3M4 | 403-777-6210 | 403-777-6213 | | |
| Elboya Elementary/Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 4804 - 6 Street SW | Calgary AB T2S 2N3 | 403-777-7760 | 403-777-7769 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b627 |
| Fairview Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 7840 Fairmount Drive SE | Calgary AB T2H 0Y1 | 403-777-7900 | 403-253-8614 | | |
| Georges P. Vanier School (Calgary) | 7 - 9 | 509 - 32 Avenue NE | Calgary AB T2E 2H3 | 403-777-7460 | 403-777-7469 | | |
| Greenview School (Calgary) | ECS - 6 | 211 McKnight Boulevard NE | Calgary AB T2E 5S7 | 403-777-6270 | 403-777-6272 | | |
| Highwood Bilingual School | ECS - 6 | 11 Holmwood Avenue NW | Calgary AB T2K 2G5 | 403-777-6200 | 403-777-6202 | srs21701@cbe.ab.ca | |

LIST OF ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOLS OFFERING FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS
UNDER SECTION 21 OF THE SCHOOL ACT
2002/2003 (continued)

| School Board / School | Grades | Address | City | Phone | Fax | E-mail | Web site |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kingsland School | ECS - 6 | 7430 - 5 Street SW | Calgary AB T2V 1B1 | 403-777-8540 | 403-777-8541 | srs31901@cbe.ab.ca | |
| Mayland Heights Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 2324 Maunsell Drive NE | Calgary AB T2E 6A2 | 403-777-6290 | 403-777-6293 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b223 |
| Varsity Acres School | ECS - 6 | 4255 - 40 Street NW | Calgary AB T3A 0H7 | 403-777-6090 | 403-777-6093 | prin238@cbe.ab.ca | www.cbe.ab.ca/b238 |
| Western Canada Senior H. S. | 10 - 12 | 641 - 17 Avenue SW | Calgary AB T2S 0B5 | 403-228-5363 | 403-777-7089 | SchInboxMainOffice816n3b5c0@Email.cbe.ab.ca | www.cbe.ab.ca/b816 |
| Westgate School | ECS - 6 | 150 Westminster Drive SW | Calgary AB T3C 2T3 | 403-777-8420 | 403-777-8423 | | |
| William Aberhart H. S. | 10 - 12 | 3009 Morley Trail NW | Calgary AB T2M 4G9 | 403-289-2551 | 403-777-7079 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b629 |
| William Reid School | ECS - 6 | 1216 - 36 Avenue SW | Calgary AB T2T 2E9 | 403-777-6940 | 403-777-6942 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b142 |
| **Canadian Rockies Regional Division No. 12** | **Gr. K-8** | **618 - 7 Avenue** | **Canmore AB T1W 2H5** | **403-609-6070** | **403-609-6071** | | **www.crsd.ab.ca** |
| Canmore Collegiate | Gr. 9 | 1800 - 8 Avenue | Canmore AB T1W 1Y2 | 403-678-6192 | 403-678-1902 | | www.crsd.ab.ca/cchs/ |
| Elizabeth Rummel School | ECS - 3 | 1033 Cougar Creek Drive | Canmore AB T1W 1C8 | 403-678-6292 | 403-678-3918 | | www.crsd.ab.ca/ers |
| Lawrence Grassi Middle School | 4 - 8 | 730 - 4 Street | Canmore AB T1W 2L4 | 403-678-6006 | 403-678-4881 | | www.crsd.ab.ca/lgms |
| **Chinook's Edge School Division No. 73** | **Gr. K-1** | **4904 - 50 Street** | **Innisfail AB T4G 1W4** | **403-227-7062** | **403-227-0174** | **division.office@chinooksedge.ab.ca** | **www.chinooksedge.ab.ca** |
| Steffie Woima Elementary School | ECS-1 | 4720 - 45 Avenue | Sylvan Lake AB T4S 1A5 | 403-887-3068 | 403-887-4731 | | |
| **Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 3** | **Gr. 7** | **PO Bag 3** | **Okotoks AB T1S 2A2** | **403-938-2659** | **403-938-4575** | | **www.redeemer.ab.ca** |
| St. Mary's School | Gr. 7 | 42 Cimarron Trail | Okotoks AB T1S 1V8 | 403-938-8048 | 403-938-8009 | | |
| **Edmonton Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 7** | **Gr. K-12** | **9807 - 106 Street** | **Edmonton AB T5K 1C2** | **780-441-6000** | **780-425-8759** | | **www.ecsd.net** |
| Father Leo Green School | ECS - 6 | 7512 - 144 Avenue | Edmonton AB T5C 2R7 | 780-476-0606 | 780-472-0673 | | www.fatherleogreen.ecsd.net |
| Frère Antoine | ECS - 6 | 2850 Millwoods Road | Edmonton AB T6K 4A1 | 780-463-2957 | 780-461-9195 | | www.frereantoine.ecsd.net |
| Grandin School | ECS - 6 | 9844 - 110 Street | Edmonton AB T5K 1J2 | 780-482-3676 | 780-488-5859 | | www.grandin.ecsd.net |
| Holy Cross School | ECS - 9 | 15120 - 104 Avenue | Edmonton AB T5P 0R5 | 780-489-1981 | 780-489-1195 | | |
| J. H. Picard | ECS - 12 | 7055 - 99 Street | Edmonton AB T6E 3R4 | 780-433-4251 | 780-432-1632 | | www.jhpicard.ecsd.net |
| St. Angela School | ECS - 6 | 13430 - 132A Street | Edmonton AB T5L 1S3 | 780-455-9743 | 780-454-1213 | | |
| St. Cecilia Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 8830 - 132 Avenue | Edmonton AB T5E 0X8 | 780-476-7696 | 780-473-7363 | | www.stcecilia.ecsd.net |
| St. Francis Xavier Catholic High School | 10 - 12 | 9250 - 163 Street | Edmonton AB T5R 0A7 | 780-489-2571 | 780-486-2564 | stfx@stfx.com | www.stfx.com |
| St. Stanislaus School | ECS - 6 | 3855 - 114 Street | Edmonton AB T6J 1M3 | 780-434-0295 | 780-434-0334 | | www.ststanislaus.ecsd.net |
| **Edmonton School District No. 7** | **Gr. K-12** | **One Kingsway Avenue** | **Edmonton AB T5H 4G9** | **780-429-8000** | **780-429-8383** | **communic@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca** | **www.epsb.edmonton.ab.ca** |
| Avalon Junior School | 7 - 9 | 5425 - 114 Street | Edmonton AB T6H 3M1 | 780-434-8402 | 780-435-7623 | avalon@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.avalonjhs.com |
| Balwin School | 7 - 9 | 7055 - 132 Avenue | Edmonton AB T5C 2A7 | 780-475-3646 | 780-478-9689 | balwin@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/balwin |
| Delwood School | ECS - 6 | 7315 Delwood Road | Edmonton AB T5C 3A9 | 780-476-3969 | 780-478-1586 | delwood@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.delwood.epsb.net |
| Greenfield School | ECS - 6 | 3735 - 114 Street | Edmonton AB T6J 2G6 | 780-434-8581 | 780-435-1303 | greenfield@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | |
| Greenview School (Edmonton) | ECS - 6 | 5904 - 38 Avenue | Edmonton AB T6L 3P5 | 780-462-0660 | 780-468-5260 | greenview@epsb.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/greenview |
| Harry Ainlay School | 10 - 12 | 4350 - 111 Street | Edmonton AB T6J 1E8 | 780-434-8451 | 780-438-1465 | harryainlay@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.harryainlay.edmonton.ab.ca |
| Holyrood School | ECS - 6 | 7920 - 94 Avenue | Edmonton AB T6C 1W4 | 780-466-2292 | 780-468-1044 | holyrood@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/holyrood |
| Kenilworth School | 7 - 9 | 7005 - 89 Avenue | Edmonton AB T6B 0N3 | 780-466-2104 | 780-468-9276 | kenilworth@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/kenilworth |
| Launer Heights School | ECS - 9 | 8210 - 142 Street | Edmonton AB T5R 0L9 | 780-483-5352 | 780-444-7432 | launer@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/launer |
| McKernan School | ECS-9 | 11330 - 76 Avenue | Edmonton AB T6G 0K1 | 780-435-4163 | 780-438-6049 | mckernan@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/mckernan |
| Richard Secord School | ECS - 6 | 4025 - 117 Street | Edmonton AB T6J 1T4 | 780-436-9839 | 780-432-1319 | rsecord@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/rsecord |
| Kingsland School | ECS - 6 | 7430 - 5 Street SW | Calgary AB T2V 1B1 | 403-777-8540 | 403-777-8541 | srs31901@cbe.ab.ca | |
| Mayland Heights Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 2324 Maunsell Drive NE | Calgary AB T2E 6A2 | 403-777-6290 | 403-777-6293 | | www.cbe.ab.ca/b223 |
| Varsity Acres School | ECS - 6 | 4255 - 40 Street NW | Calgary AB T3A 0H7 | 403-777-6090 | 403-777-6093 | prin238@cbe.ab.ca | www.cbe.ab.ca/b238 |



Handbook for French Immersion Administrators
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LIST OF ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOLS OFFERING FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS
UNDER SECTION 21 OF THE SCHOOL ACT
2002/2003 (continued)

| School Board / School | Grades | Address | City | Phone | Fax | E-mail | Web site |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rio Terrace Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 7608 - 154 Street | Edmonton AB T5R 1R7 | 780-481-6866 | 780-484-5207 | roterrace@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/roterrace |
| **Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 41** | **Gr. K-12** | **160 Festival Way** | **Sherwood Park AB T8A 5Z2** | **780-467-8896** | **780-467-5469** | **eics@eics.ab.ca** | **www.eics.ab.ca** |
| Archbishop Jordan H. S. | 10 - 12 | 2021 Brentwood Boulevard | Sherwood Park AB T8A 0X2 | 780-467-2121 | 780-467-1390 | ajh@eics.ab.ca | |
| Our Lady of Perpetual Help | ECS - 9 | 273 Fir Street | Sherwood Park AB T8A 2G7 | 780-467-5631 | 780-467-1786 | | www.olphschool.com |
| **Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14** | **Gr. K-12** | **683 Wye Road** | **Sherwood Park AB T8B 1N2** | **780-464-3477** | **780-417-8181** | | **www.ei.educ.ab.ca** |
| Ardrossan Junior/Senior H. S. | 7 - 12 | 53129 Range Road 222 | Ardrossan AB T8E 2M8 | 780-922-2228 | 780-922-5757 | | www.ei.educ.ab.ca/sch/ajs |
| École Campbelltown School | ECS - 6 | 271 Conifer Street | Sherwood Park AB T8A 1M4 | 780-467-5143 | 780-467-8608 | | |
| École élémentaire Ardrossan Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 53131 Range Road 222 | Ardrossan AB T8E 2M8 | 780-922-2066 | 780-922-5787 | ardrossan.elementary@ei.educ.ab.ca | www.ei.educ.ca/sch/ael/index.html |
| Rudolph Hennig Elementary/Junior H. S. | ECS - 9 | 9512 - 92 Street | Fort Saskatchewan AB T8L 1L7 | 780-998-2216 | 780-998-7374 | | www.ei.educ.ab.ca/sch/rhg |
| Salisbury Composite H. S. | 10 | 20 Festival Way | Sherwood Park AB T8A 4Y1 | 780-467-8816 | 780-467-4555 | salisbury@ei.educ.ab.ca | www.ei.educ.ab.ca/sch/sal |
| Sherwood Heights Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 241 Fir Street | Sherwood Park AB T8A 2G6 | 780-467-5930 | 780-467-5931 | sherwood.heights@ei.educ.ab.ca | www.ei.educ.ab.ca/sch/shi |
| **Foothills School Division No. 38** | **Gr. K-3** | **PO Box 5700** | **High River AB T1V 1M7** | **403-652-3001** | **403-652-4204** | | **www.fsd38.ab.ca** |
| Percy Pegler Elementary School | ECS - 2 | 69 Okotoks Drive | Okotoks AB T0L 1T2 | 403-938-4449 | 403-938-5458 | peglerp@fsd38.ab.ca | http://webacc.fsd38.ab.ca/schools/percypeg/percy5.htm |
| Right Honorable Joe Clark School | ECS - 3 | 1208 - 9 Avenue SE | High River AB T1V 1L2 | 403-652-2020 | 403-652-1358 | | http://webacc.fsd38.ab.ca/schools/Joeclark/title.htm |
| **Fort McMurray R. C. S. S. D. No. 32** | **Gr. K-10** | **9809 Main Street** | **Fort McMurray AB T9H 1T7** | **780-799-5700** | **780-799-5706** | **cec@fmcsd.ab.ca** | **www.fmcsd.ab.ca** |
| Father Patrick Mercredi Community H. S. | 9 - 11 | 455 Silin Forest Road | Fort McMurray AB T9H 4V6 | 780-799-5725 | 780-799-5740 | fm@fmcsd.ab.ca | www.fmcsd.ab.ca/fm/fm.html |
| Fr. M. Beauregard Education/Community Centre | ECS - 8 | 255 Athabasca Avenue | Fort McMurray AB T9J 1G7 | 780-799-5767 | 780-799-5771 | | |
| St. Paul's Elementary School | ECS - 8 | 429 Ross Haven Drive | Fort McMurray AB T9H 3P3 | 780-799-5760 | 780-799-5759 | sp@fmcsd.ab.ca | www.agt.net/public/pmorgan/stpaul.html |
| **Fort McMurray S. D. No. 2833** | **Gr. K-8** | **231 Hardin Street** | **Fort McMurray AB T9H 2G2** | **780-799-7900** | **780-743-2655** | **fmpsdweb@fmpsd.ab.ca** | **www.fmpsd.ab.ca** |
| École Dickinsfield School | ECS - 8 | 201 Dickins Drive | Fort McMurray AB T9K 1M9 | 780-791-6990 | 780-743-0401 | | www.fmpsd.ab.ca/schools/df/df.html |
| Westwood Community High School | 10 | 221 Tundra Drive | Fort McMurray AB T9H 4Z7 | 780-791-1986 | 780-743-9663 | | |
| **Golden Hills Regional Division No. 15** | **Gr. 4-9** | **435A Highway 1** | **Strathmore AB T1P 1J4** | **403-934-5121** | **403-934-5125** | | **www.goldenhills-schools.com** |
| Drumheller Composite H. S. | 8 - 9 | 450 - 17 Street East | Drumheller AB T0J 0Y5 | 403-823-5171 | 403-823-4058 | drumcomp@telusplanet.net | www.drumcomp.homestead.com |
| Greentree School | 5 - 6 | 1000 - 12 Avenue SE | Drumheller AB T0J 0Y7 | 403-823-5244 | 403-823-6819 | greentre@telusplanet.net | www.goldenhills-schools.com/greentree |
| **Grande Prairie R. C. S. S. D. No. 28** | **Gr. K-12** | **9902 - 101 Street** | **Grande Prairie AB T8V 2P5** | **780-532-3013** | **780-532-3430** | **cec@gpcsd28.ab.ca** | **www.gpcsd28.ab.ca** |
| École St-Gérard R. C. S. School | ECS - 9 | 9724 - 88 Avenue | Grande Prairie AB T8V 0B7 | 780-532-5398 | 780-532-5761 | stgerard@gpcsd28.ab.ca | www.gpcsd28.ab.ca/stgerards |
| St. Joseph Catholic H. S. | 10 - 12 | 10520 - 68 Avenue | Grande Prairie AB T8W 2P1 | 780-532-7779 | 780-539-3242 | sjchs@gpcsd28.ab.ca | www.gpcsd28.ab.ca/stjosephs |
| **Grande Prairie School District No. 2357** | **Gr. K-12** | **10213 - 99 Street** | **Grande Prairie AB T8V 2H3** | **780-532-4491** | **780-539-4265** | **gppsd@gppsd.ab.ca** | **www.gppsd.ab.ca** |
| Grande Prairie Composite H. S. | 10 - 12 | 11202 - 104 Street | Grande Prairie AB T8V 2Z1 | 780-532-7721 | 780-532-6036 | gpcomp@gppsd.ab.ca | www.gppsd.ab.ca/gpcomp |
| Montrose Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 6431 - 98 Street | Grande Prairie AB T8W 2H3 | 780-532-8861 | 780-539-6389 | montrose@gppsd.ab.ca | www.gppsd.ab.ca/montrose |
| Parkside Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 9617 - 91A Avenue | Grande Prairie AB T8V 0G7 | 780-532-7449 | 780-539-7910 | parkside@gppsd.ab.ca | www.gppsd.ab.ca/parkside |
| **Grande Yellowhead Regional Division No. 35** | **Gr. K-12** | **3656 First Avenue** | **Edson AB T7E 1S8** | **780-723-4471** | **780-723-2414** | **escgyrd@gyrd.ab.ca** | **www.gyrd.ab.ca** |
| École Mountain View School | ECS - 7 | 141 MacLeod Avenue | Hinton AB T7V 1T6 | 780-865-2628 | 780-865-5858 | | |
| École Pine Grove School | ECS - 6 | 4619 - 12 Avenue | Edson AB T7E 1S7 | 780-723-3992 | 780-723-2189 | | |
| Harry Collinge H. S. | 8 - 12 | 158 Sunwapta Drive | Hinton AB T7V 1T7 | 780-865-2521 | 780-865-5011 | | |
| Jubilee Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 4912 - 12 Avenue | Edson AB T7E 1S7 | 780-723-5515 | 780-723-5554 | | |
| Parkland Composite H. S. | 10 - 12 | 4630 - 12 Avenue | Edson AB T7E 1S7 | 780-723-6035 | 780-723-6274 | | |
| **Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Division No. 29** | **Gr. K-12** | **6 St. Vital Avenue** | **St. Albert AB T8N 1K2** | **780-459-7711** | **780-458-3213** | | **www.gsacrd.ab.ca** |
| École Father Jan Community School | ECS - 6 | 15 Mission Avenue | St. Albert AB T8N 1H6 | 780-458-3300 | 780-459-5605 | fj@gsacrd.ca | www.efj.gsacrd.ab.ca/index.htm |
| Rio Terrace Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 7608 - 154 Street | Edmonton AB T5R 1R7 | 780-481-6866 | 780-484-5207 | roterrace@epsb.edmonton.ab.ca | www.epsb.ca/schools/roterrace |

LIST OF ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOLS OFFERING FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS
UNDER SECTION 21 OF THE SCHOOL ACT
2002/2003 (continued)

| School Board / School | Grades | Address | City | Phone | Fax | E-mail | Web site |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| École Marie Poburan | ECS - 6 | 100 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue | St. Albert AB T8N 5Y2 | 780-458-1112 | 780-458-1137 | | www.gsacrd.ab.ca/emp |
| École Secondaire Sainte-Marguerite d'Youville | 7 - 12 | 51 Boudreau Road | St. Albert AB T8N 6B7 | 780-459-5702 | 780-460-9161 | essmy@gsacrd.ca | www.essmy.gsacrd.ab.ca |
| Georges H. Primeau School | 6 - 8 | 811 Grandin Drive | Morinville AB T8R 1L7 | 780-939-3593 | 780-939-3576 | | |
| Georges P. Vanier School (Morinville) | ECS - 5 | 10020 - 101 Avenue | Morinville AB T8R 1L5 | 780-939-4285 | 780-939-4685 | | www.gpv.gsacrd.ab.ca |
| St. Albert Catholic H. S. | 10 - 12 | 33 Malmo Drive | St. Albert AB T8N 1L5 | 780-459-7781 | 780-458-7912 | sachs_info@sachs.gsacrd.ab.ca | www.sachs.ab.ca |
| **High Prairie School Division No. 48** | **Gr. K-12** | **PO Box 870** | **High Prairie AB T0G 1E0** | **780-523-3337** | **780-523-4639** | | **www.hpsd48** |
| C. J. Schurter Elementary School | ECS | 300 - 6 Avenue NE | Slave Lake AB T0G 2A2 | 780-849-4344 | 780-849-2155 | | www.hpsd48/cjs/index.html |
| E. G. Wahlstrom School | 2 - 6 | 228 - 4 Avenue NW | Slave Lake AB T0G 2A1 | 780-849-3539 | 780-849-3792 | | |
| École Routhier School | ECS - 6 | PO Box 540 | Falher AB T0H 1M0 | 780-837-2114 | 780-837-2821 | routhier@hpsd48.ab.ca | |
| Georges P. Vanier School (Donnelly) | 7 - 12 | PO Box 60 | Donnelly AB T0H 1G0 | 780-925-3959 | 780-925-2466 | | |
| **Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37** | **Gr. K-12** | **10307 - 99 Street** | **Peace River AB T8S 1R5** | **780-624-3956** | **780-624-1154** | **hf37@hfcrd.ab.ca** | **www.hfcrd.ab.ca** |
| Glenmary School | 7 - 12 | 8801 - 96 Street | Peace River AB T8S 1R6 | 780-624-5656 | 780-624-3730 | | www.hfcrd.ab.ca/glenmary/index.html |
| Good Shepherd School | ECS - 6 | 9810 - 71 Avenue | Peace River AB T8S 1R4 | 780-624-3432 | 780-624-2550 | gshep@hfcrd.ab.ca | www.hfcrd.ab.ca/goodshepherd/index.html |
| **Holy Spirit R. C. S. Regional Division No. 4** | **Gr. K-12** | **534 - 18 Street South** | **Lethbridge AB T1J 3E7** | **403-327-9555** | **403-327-9595** | | **www.holyspirit.ab.ca** |
| Catholic Central H. S. | 10 - 12 | 405 - 18 Street South | Lethbridge AB T1J 3E5 | 403-327-4596 | 403-320-8896 | | www.holyspirit.ab.ca/cch |
| St. Francis Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 333 - 18 Street South | Lethbridge AB T1J 3E5 | 403-327-3402 | 403-320-1877 | | www.holyspirit.ab.ca/st.francis |
| St. Mary School | ECS - 6 | 1923 - 5 Avenue South | Lethbridge AB T1J 0W7 | 403-327-3098 | 403-329-8865 | | www.holyspirit.ab.ca/st.mary |
| St. Michael's School | 1 - 8 | 864 Christie Avenue | Pincher Creek AB T0K 1W0 | 403-627-3488 | 403-627-5916 | | www.holyspirit.ab.ca/st.michael |
| **Lakeland R. C. S. S. D. No. 150** | **Gr. K-12** | **4810 - 46 Street** | **Bonnyville AB T9N 1B5** | **780-826-3235** | **780-826-7576** | | **www.lcsd150.ab.ca** |
| Assumption Junior/Senior H. S. | 7 - 12 | 5209 - 48 Avenue | Cold Lake AB T9M 1S8 | 780-594-4050 | 780-594-3585 | | www.lcsd150.ab.ca/ajsh/index.html |
| École Dr Bernard Brosseau School | 5 - 8 | PO Bag 1009 | Bonnyville AB T9N 2J7 | 780-826-7005 | 780-826-4185 | | www.lcsd150.ab.ca/drb/index.html |
| École Notre-Dame High School | 9 - 12 | PO Box 5009 (5006 - 49 Avenue) | Bonnyville AB T9N 2G3 | 780-826-3245 | 780-826-1934 | | www.lcsd150.ab.ca/ndh/index.html |
| Mackenzie River School | ECS - 6 | PO Box 4340 STN Forces | Cold Lake AB T9M 2C1 | 780-594-0700 | 780-594-1801 | home@mackenzie.tc | www.learn.at/mackenzie |
| Notre-Dame Elementary School | ECS - 4 | 4711 - 48 Street | Bonnyville AB T9N 2E6 | 780-826-3485 | 780-826-4180 | | www.lcsd150.ab.ca/nde/index.html |
| St. Dominic School | ECS - 6 | 920 - 7 Street | Cold Lake AB T9M 1M5 | 780-639-3520 | 780-639-2778 | | www.lcsd150.ab.ca/sde/index.html |
| **Lethbridge School District No. 51** | **Gr. K-12** | **433 - 15 Street South** | **Lethbridge AB T1J 2Z5** | **403-380-5301** | **403-327-4387** | **centraloffice@lethsd.ab.ca** | **www.lethsd.ab.ca** |
| École Agnes Davidson School | ECS - 6 | 2103 - 20 Street South | Lethbridge AB T1K 2G7 | 403-328-5153 | 403-320-1912 | davidson@lethsd.ab.ca | www.lethsd.ab.ca/davidson |
| Gilbert Paterson Community School | 7 - 9 | 2109 - 12 Avenue South | Lethbridge AB T1K 0P1 | 403-329-0125 | 403-320-8418 | paterson@lethsd.ab.ca | www.lethsd.ab.ca/paterson |
| Lethbridge Collegiate Institute | 10 - 12 | 1701 - 5 Avenue South | Lethbridge AB T1J 0W4 | 403-328-9606 | 403-328-9979 | lci@lethsd.ab.ca | www.lethsd.ab.ca/lci |
| **Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42** | **Gr. K-8** | **3804B - 47 Street** | **Whitecourt AB T7S 1M8** | **780-778-5666** | **780-778-2727** | | **www.livingwaters.ab.ca** |
| St. Mary of the Lake | ECS - 9 | 409 - 6 Avenue SW | Slave Lake AB T0G 2A4 | 780-849-5244 | 780-849-1919 | | www.lwaters.ab.ca |
| ***Lycée Louis Pasteur (Private)*** | ***ECS - 9*** | ***4099 Garrison Blvd SW*** | ***Calgary AB T2T 6G2*** | ***403-243-5420*** | ***403-287-2245*** | ***sdmin.lycee@telusplanet.net*** | |
| **Medicine Hat School District No. 76** | **Gr. K-12** | **601 First Avenue SW** | **Medicine Hat AB T1A 4Y7** | **403-528-6700** | **403-529-5339** | | **www.sd76.ab.ca** |
| Connaught School | ECS - 6 | 101 - 8 Street SW | Medicine Hat AB T1A 4L5 | 403-526-2392 | 403-526-2140 | conn@sd76.ab.ca | www.sd76.ab.ca/schools/conn/home.htm |
| Crescent Heights H. S. | 7 - 12 | 1201 Division Avenue NE | Medicine Hat AB T1A 5Y8 | 403-527-6641 | 403-526-2018 | chhs@sd76.ab.ca | www.sd76.ab.ca/schools/chhs/crescent.htm |
| **Northern Lights School Division No. 69** | **Gr. K-6** | **6005 - 50 Avenue** | **Bonnyville AB T9N 2L4** | **780-826-3145** | **780-826-4600** | | **www.nlsd.ab.ca** |
| École Plamondon School | ECS - 6 | PO Box 90 | Plamondon AB T0A 2T0 | 780-798-3840 | 780-798-3850 | | www.nlsd.ab.ca/eplam |
| R. A. Reynolds School | ECS - 5 | PO Box 4430 - STN Forces | Cold Lake AB T9M 2C1 | 780-594-8197 | 780-594-1815 | | www.nlsd.ab.ca/reynolds |



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LIST OF ALBERTA SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOLS OFFERING FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS
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| School Board / School | Grades | Address | City | Phone | Fax | E-mail | Web site |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Parkland School Division No. 70** | **Gr. K-12** | **4603 - 48 Street** | **Stony Plain AB T7Z 2A8** | **780-963-4010** | **780-963-4169** | **mailroom@psd70.ab.ca** | **www.psd70.ab.ca** |
| Meridian Heights School | ECS - 9 | 4119 - 43 Street | Stony Plain AB T7Z 1R2 | 780-963-2280 | 780-968-2193 | meridian@psd70.ab.ca | www.psd70.ab.ca/meridian |
| Queen Street Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 505 Queen Street | Spruce Grove AB T7X 2V2 | 780-962-3717 | 780-962-3720 | queenstreet@psd70.ab.ca | www.psd70.ab.ca/queenstreet |
| Spruce Grove Composite H. S. | 10 - 12 | 1000 Calahoo Road | Spruce Grove AB T7X 2T7 | 780-962-0800 | 780-962-9555 | sgchs@psd70.ab.ca | www.psd70.ab.ca/sgchs |
| Woodhaven Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 475 King Street | Spruce Grove AB T7X 2T7 | 780-962-2626 | 780-962-8515 | woodhaven@psd70.ab.ca | |
| **Peace River School Division No. 10** | **Gr. K-12** | **PO Box 6960** | **Peace River AB T8S 1S7** | **780-624-3601** | **780-624-5941** | **peaceriversd@prsd.ab.ca** | **www.prsd.ab.ca** |
| McGrath Elementary School | 4 - 6 | 7401 - 99 Street | Peace River AB T8S 1R4 | 780-624-3142 | 780-624-9569 | McGrath@prsd.ab.ca | www.prsd.ab.ca/mc |
| Peace River H. S. | 10 - 11 | 10001 - 91 Avenue | Peace River AB T8S 1Z5 | 780-624-4221 | 780-624-4048 | peacehigh@prsd.ab.ca | www.prsd.ab.ca/ph |
| Springfield Elementary School | ECS - 3 | 7701 - 99 Street | Peace River AB T8S 1R4 | 780-624-2143 | 780-624-2870 | springfield@prsd.ab.ca | www.prsd.ab.ca/sp |
| T. A. Norris Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 8701 - 95 Street | Peace River AB T8S 1R6 | 780-624-3144 | 780-624-9568 | TANorris@prsd.ab.ca | www.prsd.ab.ca/ta |
| **Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7** | **Gr. K-12** | **5310 - 49 Street** | **Barrhead AB T7N 1P3** | **780-674-8500** | **780-674-3262** | **info@phrd.ab.ca** | **www.phrd.ab.ca** |
| Barrhead Composite High School | 7 - 9 | 5307 - 53 Avenue | Barrhead AB T7N 1P2 | 780-674-8522 | 780-674-8543 | | www.phrd.ab.ca/schools/bchs |
| Barrhead Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 5103 - 53 Avenue | Barrhead AB T7N 1N9 | 780-674-8518 | 780-674-8541 | | www.phrd.ab.ca/schools/bes |
| Richard F. Staples H. S. | 7 - 8 | 10015 - 104 Street | Westlock AB T7P 1T8 | 780-349-4454 | 780-349-5948 | | |
| Westlock Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 10515 - 106A Street | Westlock AB T7P 2E7 | 780-349-3385 | 780-349-3478 | | www.phrd.ab.ca/schools/wes |
| **Red Deer Catholic Regional Division No. 39** | **Gr. K-12** | **5210 - 61 Street** | **Red Deer AB T4N 6N8** | **403-343-1055** | **403-347-6410** | | **www.rdcrd.ab.ca** |
| École Camille J. Lerouge School | ECS - 9 | 5530 - 42A Avenue | Red Deer AB T4N 3A8 | 403-347-7830 | 403-343-9285 | | www.crosswinds.net/~cjlerouge/ |
| École Secondaire Notre Dame H. S. | 10 - 12 | 50 Lees Street | Red Deer AB T4R 2P6 | 403-342-4800 | 403-343-2249 | | |
| Mother Teresa | ECS-1 | 79 Old Boomer Road | Sylvan Lake AB T4S 1Z4 | 403-887-6371 | 403-887-6373 | | |
| **Red Deer School District No. 104** | **Gr. K-12** | **4747 - 53 Street** | **Red Deer AB T4N 2E6** | **403-343-1405** | **403-347-8190** | **info@rdpsd.ab.ca** | **www.rdpsd.ab.ca** |
| Central Middle School | 6 - 8 | 5121 - 48 Avenue | Red Deer AB T4N 3T7 | 403-346-4397 | 403-342-3783 | cms@rdpsd.ab.ca | www.rdpsd.ab.ca/cms/index.htm |
| Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive H. S. | 9 - 12 | 4204 - 58 Street | Red Deer AB T4C 2L6 | 403-347-1171 | 403-340-1676 | ltchs@rdpsd.ab.ca | www.rdpsd.ab.ca/ltchs |
| Mountview School | ECS - 5 | 4331 - 34 Street | Red Deer AB T4N 0N9 | 403-346-5765 | 403-346-5022 | mv@rdpsd.ab.ca | www.rdpsd.ab.ca/mv |
| Oriole Park School | ECS - 5 | 5 Oldbury Street | Red Deer AB T4N 5A8 | 403-347-3731 | 403-340-3378 | op@rdpsd.ab.ca | www.rdpsd.ab.ca/op |
| **Rocky View School Division No. 41** | **Gr. K-12** | **2616 - 18 Street NE** | **Calgary AB T2E 7R1** | **403-250-1504** | **403-250-3281** | | **www.rockyview.ab.ca** |
| Cochrane H. S. | 9 - 12 | 529 - 4 Avenue North | Cochrane AB T4C 1Y6 | 403-932-2542 | 403-932-5133 | cochrane@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/cochrane |
| École Airdrie Middle School | 5 - 8 | PO Bag 9 (332 First Avenue NE) | Airdrie AB T4B 1K5 | 403-948-5969 | 403-948-5869 | earns@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/airdrie |
| Edwards Elementary School | ECS - 4 | 324 - 3 Avenue NE | Airdrie AB T4B 1R7 | 403-948-5922 | 403-948-6061 | edwards@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/edwards |
| Elbow Valley Elementary School | ECS - 4 | 244209 Range Road 33 | Calgary AB T3Z 2E8 | 403-242-1117 | 403-246-7666 | evalley@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/evalley |
| Elizabeth Barrett Elementary School | ECS - 4 | 605 - 4 Avenue North | Cochrane AB T4C 1Y5 | 403-932-3151 | 403-932-3157 | ebarrett@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/barrett |
| George McDougall H. S. | 9 - 12 | 412 - 3 Avenue NE | Airdrie AB T4B 1R7 | 403-948-5935 | 403-948-4297 | mcdougal@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/mcdougall |
| Manachaban School | 5 - 8 | 724 Chiniki Drive | Cochrane AB T4C 1Y4 | 403-932-2215 | 403-932-6761 | manachbn@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/manachaban |
| Springbank Middle School | 5 - 6 | 244235 Range Road 33 | Calgary AB T3Z 2E8 | 403-242-4456 | 403-242-8845 | springmd@rockyview.ab.ca | www.rockyview.ab.ca/springmd |
| **St. Albert P. S. S. District No. 6** | **Gr. K-12** | **60 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue** | **St. Albert AB T8N 0G4** | **780-460-3712** | **780-460-7686** | | **www.spschools.org** |
| Leo Nickerson Elementary School | ECS - 6 | 10 Sycamore Avenue | St. Albert AB T8N 0K3 | 780-459-4426 | 780-460-7792 | | www.lnem.spschools.org |
| Muriel Martin Elementary School | ECS - 5 | 110 Deer Ridge Drive | St. Albert AB T8N 5Z3 | 780-458-0205 | 780-460-0662 | | www.mmem.spschools.org |
| Paul Kane H. S. | 10 - 12 | 12 Cunningham Road | St. Albert AB T8N 2E9 | 780-459-4405 | 780-459-0187 | | www.pkhs.spschools.org |
| Sir George Simpson Junior H. S. | 6 - 9 | 50 Grosvenor Boulevard | St. Albert AB T8N 0X6 | 780-459-4456 | 780-459-6209 | | www.sgsjh.spschools.org |

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| School Board / School | Grades | Address | City | Phone | Fax | E-mail | Web site |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1** | **Gr. K-12** | **4901 - 47 Street** | **St-Paul AB T0A 3A3** | **780-645-3323** | **780-645-5789** | **spedu@mcsnet.ab.ca** | **www.stpauleducation.ab.ca** |
| École Élémentaire St. Paul Elementary School | Gr. K-5 | 4901 - 47 Street | St-Paul AB T0A 3A3 | 780-645-3537 | 780-645-2606 | specsele@mcsnet.ab.ca | http://206.75.231.73/ses |
| École Mallaig Community School | ECS-6 | PO Box 90 | Mallaig AB T0A 2K0 | 780-635-3858 | 780-635-3938 | mallcomm@telusplanet.net | |
| Racette Junior High School | Gr. 6-9 | 4901 - 47 Street | St-Paul AB T0A 3A3 | 780-645-3571 | 780-645-2496 | racettejr@mcsnet.ab.ca | |
| ***Victory Christian Fellowship of Lethbridge (Private)*** | ***Gr. K*** | ***PO Box 1780*** | ***Lethbridge AB T1J 4K4*** | ***403-320-2772*** | ***403-327-9013*** | | |
| *Agape Early Childhood Services (Private)* | *ECS* | *PO Box 1780* | *Lethbridge AB T1J 4K4* | *403-320-2772* | *403-327-9013* | | |
| ***West Island College (Private)*** | ***7 - 11*** | ***7410 Blackfoot Trail SE*** | ***Calgary AB T2H 1M5*** | ***403-255-5300*** | ***403-252-1434*** | ***office@westislandcollege.ab.ca*** | ***www.westislandcollege.ab.ca*** |
| **Wetaskiwin Regional Division No. 11** | **Gr. K-9** | **4710 - 55 Street** | **Wetaskiwin AB T9A 3B7** | **780-352-6018** | **780-352-7886** | **wrps@wrps.ab.ca** | **www.members.home.net/wetaskiwin.schools** |
| École Queen Elizabeth School | 7 - 9 | 4720 - 51 Street | Wetaskiwin AB T9A 0K3 | 780-352-2281 | 780-352-4873 | qe@wrps.ab.ca | |
| Parkdale School | ECS - 6 | 4107 - 54 Street | Wetaskiwin AB T9A 1S8 | 780-352-4594 | 780-352-7337 | pd@wrps.ab.ca | www.wtc.ab.ca/parkdale |
| **Wild Rose School Division No. 66** | **Gr. K-12** | **4912 - 43 Street** | **Rocky Mountain House AB T4T 1P4** | **403-845-3376** | **403-845-3850** | | **www.wrsd.ca** |
| Pioneer School | 7 - 8 | 5516 - 54 Street | Rocky Mountain House AB T4T 1S7 | 403-845-2468 | 403-845-5658 | pioneer@wrsd.ab.ca | www.wrsd.ab.ca/pioneer/pioneerhome.html |
| Rocky Elementary | ECS - 6 | 4703 - 50 Avenue | Rocky Mountain House AB T4T 1S4 | 403-845-3541 | 403-845-5480 | rockyelem@wrsd.ab.ca | www.wrsd.ab.ca/rockyelem |
| Will Sinclair H. S. | 9 - 12 | 5207 - 48 Street | Rocky Mountain House AB T4T 1S3 | 403-845-3711 | 403-845-7475 | wshs@wshs.wrsd.ab.ca | www.wshs.wrsd.ab.ca |
| **Wolf Creek School Division No. 72** | **Gr. K-12** | **6000 - Highway 2A** | **Ponoka AB T4J 1P6** | **403-783-3473** | **403-783-3483** | | **www.wolfcreek.ab.ca** |
| James S. McCormick School | ECS - 2 | 5424 - 50 Street | Lacombe AB T4L1G2 | 403-782-3096 | 403-782-3091 | jsm@wolfcreek.ab.ca | |
| Lacombe Composite H. S. | 10 - 12 | 5628 - 56 Avenue | Lacombe AB T4L 1G6 | 403-782-6615 | 403-782-4266 | | |
| Lacombe Junior H. S. | 7 - 9 | 5830 - 50 Street | Lacombe AB T4L 1G5 | 403-782-3812 | 403-782-7405 | | |
| Lacombe Upper Elementary School | 3 - 6 | 5414 - 50 Street | Lacombe AB T4L 1G4 | 403-782-7410 | 403-782-7400 | lue@wolfcreek.ab.ca | |



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# 8 Recruitment and Retention of French Immersion Students

## The Importance of Recruitment and Retention to Program Success

a

French immersion in Alberta is an alternative program, a program of choice. Since there is no requirement that school jurisdictions offer a French immersion program nor that parents choose it when it is offered, jurisdictions and schools with French immersion programs sometimes face a dilemma. Without sufficient numbers of students in a program, the student population does not generate sufficient revenue to offer a quality program. But without a quality program, the jurisdiction or school is often unable to attract sufficient students, and hence unable to generate sufficient funding. Fortunately, for many jurisdictions and schools throughout Alberta, French immersion programs are already well established, making this particular dilemma less problematic than it once was. But even today, program quality and the ability to attract and keep students go hand-in-hand; so much so, that one measure of the success of a French immersion program is the number of students it can attract and retain. (See Chapter 2 and Chapter 5, pages 57–58.)

Retention of students is necessary for another reason as well. The goals, and therefore benefits, of a French immersion program are only fully realized when students remain in the program through Grade 12 (see Chapter 1, page 3). Therefore, for a French immersion program to be considered successful, it must extend into the senior high school years, including some courses at the Grade 12 level. But this extension is not always possible if too many early immersion students leave the program at the end of Grade 6, or insufficient numbers of students are attracted to start late immersion in Grade 6 or 7, or if early or late immersion students drop out in their senior high school years.

Finally, where failing to retain immersion students is a result of negative experiences with the program, the pool of dissatisfied families that is created may, in relating their experiences, turn away many prospective students, prospects who could have received tremendous benefits from a French immersion program. Therefore, retaining students is an important recruitment strategy in itself.

Since recruitment and retention of French immersion students are as vital to the success of the program as is its quality, and since these aspects are



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inescapably intertwined, administrators should monitor enrolments and enrolment trends at all levels and work with all stakeholders to address issues of recruitment and retention.

**For More Information** fmi

Parnell, Rick. "Marketing French Immersion in Alberta." Notes for presentation. *French Immersion Administrators' Workshop.* Edmonton, January 21, 2000. Unpublished.

Parnell, Rick. "Marketing French Immersion in Alberta: A Conceptual Framework." [n.p.], n.d. (See Appendix F.)

### The Factors that Influence Recruitment

In a presentation to Alberta French immersion administrators in January 2000, Rick Parnell discussed the application of the business model to the marketing of the French immersion program. He explained that while

> "...public education is not a business, and education is not a product that you can put a price on... I think we would all agree that public education has some intrinsic value, and that the perceived value is likely to differ from family to family. I think you would also have to agree that the choices the family makes with respect to education will affect and reflect family values and quality of life. **These differences in values and perceptions are what defines the market for a particular education offering**, just as differences in values and perceptions define that market for commercial goods and services." (Rick Parnell, "Marketing French Immersion in Alberta." Notes for presentation. *French Immersion Administrators' Workshop*, 2000.)

From a business perspective, successful recruitment strategies are based on the understanding that the client determines all value. What does this mean in education? No matter how good a program is in the eyes of its providers (the jurisdiction or school), if it does not suit the target clientele (parents and students), it will not be considered. So what do parents, or students themselves in later years, consider valuable in any educational program? According to Parnell, there are six broad categories to consider:

- technical—quality of education and facilities
- psychological—perceptions, fears and beliefs
- demographic—financial stability, family profile: ages and background
- economic—perception of future financial benefits
- political—predisposition towards the place of the French language in Canada and the world
- cultural—connection between multilingualism and culture or roots

Each individual must find sufficient value in one or more of these areas to incline him or her to choose a particular program. The weight that is placed on these areas varies from individual to individual, as well.


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Figure 2 offers a sense of the complexity of the decision as it relates to the French immersion program. Even more detail could be attached to match particular circumstances. Again, as in a business model, to maximise the attractiveness of a French immersion program to new students, the program must be considered for its strengths and weaknesses in each of these areas, and marketing efforts must be oriented around its strengths.

**Factors Considered**
**When Parents Decide on a French Immersion Program**

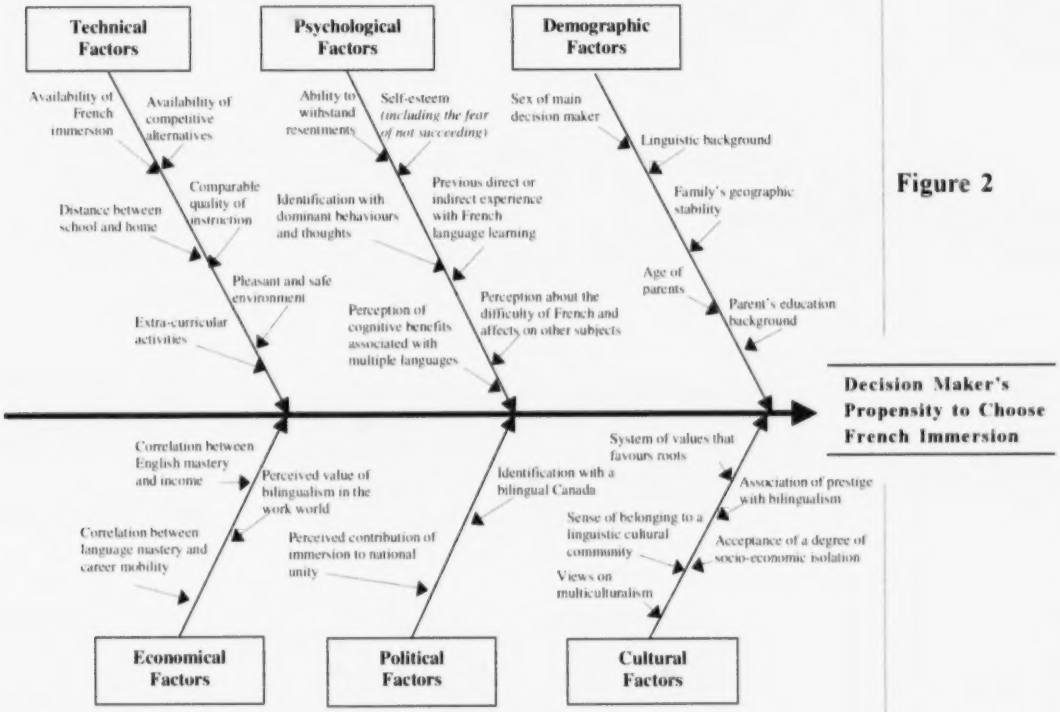


**Figure 2**

Factors that may negatively influence recruitment of French immersion students:

- accessibility to the school in which French immersion is offered—distance and busing fees
- fears that the child's English skills may suffer
- increased program choice in some school jurisdictions
- lack of time and resources to develop and implement effective marketing strategies
- competition among schools in recruiting students
- fears that subject areas may suffer; that, for example, mathematics cannot be learned in French
- concerns on the part of parents who are not themselves proficient in French, that they will not be able to help their child
- perceptions that the program is only for brighter or economically advantaged students
- anti-Quebec or anti-official languages sentiment
- perceptions that French is not a worthwhile language to learn, in terms of economic advantages
- concerns that the child may lose his or her cultural identity




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- concerns on the part of older students (those eligible for late immersion) that French immersion is too hard, or that they will not be well prepared to study in English at college or university

Factors that may positively influence recruitment of French immersion students:

- desire for a better education and educational outcomes for the child (see pages 112–113)
- desire for better job opportunities and economic and social advantages for the child
- perceptions that knowing French is valuable in the global economy and society
- parental desire for the child to have advantages the parent did not have
- the similarity between the two languages—French is 27 percent lexically similar to the English language and there is a 39 percent overlap of cognates between French and English
- enhanced extra-curricular activities
- supportive sentiments regarding Canadian unity
- supportive sentiments about multiculturalism
- better preparation for an increasingly mobile society

### The Factors that Influence Retention

Those who have already made a commitment to a program define success much differently. Once in the program, the positive values that attracted the students or their parents in the first place must be supported by what actually takes place within the program. A program must avoid several negatives which, if they begin to outweigh the positive attractions, will lead to attrition from the program.

Retention at the elementary level may be undermined by:

- difficulty experienced by the student in understanding, speaking or reading French
- a parent's frustration with not being able to understand French
- the child not being able to read English, especially by Christmas of Grade 1
- poor relations between the student and the immersion teacher, or the parent and the immersion teacher
- a student's emotional or behavioural problems
- lack of remedial help within the immersion program
- the level of support and information provided to parents (see Chapter 6)
- the possibility of transferring a student from the French immersion to the English program

At the secondary level, retention may be affected by:

- breadth and variety of courses available in French (e.g., fewer complementary courses offered in French, or fewer sciences)
- less time for complementary courses because of the additional language arts course
- perception of heavier workload in French immersion
- concerns about needing English vocabulary at the post-secondary level, especially in science


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- disappointment or boredom with the program
- parent's perceptions of the level of fluency already attained (see Chapter 2, page 32)
- desire for better grades—perceived as being easier to achieve in English
- perceived teacher or instructional quality
- location of the program—in relation to where the student's peers go, reputation of the school in which the program is housed, as well as proximity to home
- degree of students' satisfaction with their current level of proficiency in French and realistic expectations about retaining the language
- goals and perceptions regarding post-secondary education
- perceptions of the value of French in the global economy

## Marketing: The Process

b

For business, marketing is the process involved in moving a product or service from producer to consumer. In this case, the product is the French immersion program; the producer is the educational system in general, but more specifically the jurisdiction or school; and the consumer is the student or parent. For educators, then, marketing is the strategy for recruiting and retaining students and their families.

Marketing has four components. In business they are called the 4 Ps: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. With some allowance for the difference between business and education, these four components remain a vital element of any school's marketing program.

- **Product:** The centrepiece of marketing a school program is the program itself, as discussed earlier. The school can also be part of the product. Is it seen to be a good facility: welcoming, attractive, well equipped with a proven track record?

- **Price:** Although the basic costs are covered with public funds, parental choice of an educational program is not entirely independent of costs. Some programs have extra fees; some do not. Of those programs that do have extra fees, some are more costly than others. With regards to French immersion, some parents also may be concerned about the eventual cost of extra-curricular activities, such as a student trip to Quebec or France during Spring Break. Even where there are no financial costs, there are other kinds of costs. For example, if parents want to be involved in their children's education, but see their lack of proficiency in French as closing the door, that is a cost to them as a result of choosing the program.

- **Place:** Place is significant to educational marketing and especially relevant at the jurisdictional level. Are the desired programs offered in schools where the demand is most concentrated or, at least, in areas which are easily accessible to the target population? Is accessibility improved by convenient and affordable busing?

- **Promotion:** This is the component that most people think of when they think of marketing: the actual advertising and information dissemination strategies and activities themselves (see pages 115–120).

**Did you know?**

- French is spoken by 128 million people worldwide.
- The French language is 27 percent lexically similar to English, 89 percent similar to Italian and 75 percent similar to Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish and German.
- After English, French is spoken in more countries and on more continents than any other language.
- French is the second language of the Internet (after English).
- French is a language of world diplomacy and a working language of international organizations, such as the European Economic Community, the United Nations, NATO, the International Monetary Fund and the International Olympic Committee.
- France is a major world research centre in the fields of high-energy physics and medical research, including genetics.

Just imagine the opportunities for your students!

## The Messages Specific to Promoting French Immersion

In marketing a French immersion program, the key messages will almost always include the benefits of learning a second language, the reasons for learning French as that second language, and basic points about the program itself: accessibility, quality, continuity, extra-curricular opportunities, and outcomes.

Some of the messages that may be used follow:

Learning a second language:
- develops learning and listening skills as well as the self-discipline necessary for life-long learning
- increases cognitive abilities, creating a more flexible thinker
- improves knowledge of and skills in one's first language
- makes learning yet another language much easier

Knowing a second language:
- increases personal pleasures, such as the enjoyment of literature, art, music, theatre, travel, and spectator sports
- increases understanding of one's self and broadens opportunities to develop personal relationships
- increases understanding of and respect for other peoples and cultures
- provides access to a larger pool of information and to more educational and career opportunities
- provides a competitive edge in the job market

French is a natural second language for many Canadians. Its strong presence throughout Canada makes it an easy and economical second language to learn because of ready access to:
- textual, audiovisual and electronic resources in French
- large numbers of French speakers from which to draw qualified teachers
- abundant French media sources, and
- easy access to French speaking role models and activities in francophone communities

Parents also need information about the program itself. First and foremost, they need to know that French immersion is a safe choice, that it will DO NO HARM. Administrators should be prepared to dispel myths, such as those found on pages 12–15, and provide parents with information about the following:
- program goals and realistic expectations (see pages 1–3)
- how immersion works (see pages 4–9)
- research results (see pages 10–11)
- the effect on English and other subject areas (see pages 27–28)
- what happens if their child experiences difficulties (see Chapter 9)
- staff qualifications, such as fluency in French, subject area knowledge, etc.

- how to prepare their child for Kindergarten
- practical concerns such as busing, fees, lunchroom supervision
- how they can help with homework and support their child's learning (see Chapter 6)
- where they can get more information and support (see pages 90–91)

### Planning for the Long-term Viability of a French Immersion Program

> "In order for a plan to be successful it must be informed from the market. First of all, therefore, you need to do the customer perception research. From that research, strategies can be formulated towards addressing specific values through your education programs. In effect, the product must match the market it wishes to attract." (Rick Parnell, "Marketing French Immersion in Alberta." Notes for presentation. *French Immersion Administrators' Workshop*, 2000.)

Developing a marketing strategy will involve early planning for improvements to the French immersion program and paying attention to the needs and values of the potential parent/student market to ensure continuing alignment with customer values. You may not know what to change, but you will recognize that change is needed.

Again Parnell advises:

> "Processes and programs will have to acknowledge the benefits and necessity in establishing long-term partnerships between the educators and families benefiting from the service offered." (op. cit.)

This partnership begins with ensuring that immersion parents are well informed and that prospective immersion parents are aware of the program and its potential for their children. (See Chapter 6.)

Planning a marketing strategy starts with four steps.

First, understand the need for a marketing plan and annual promotion.

Recruiting and retaining French immersion students includes marketing the school as well as the program and may, in some cases, include marketing the school jurisdiction. Marketing is a continuous process that is integral to all the school does—once you attract a customer, you must work to retain that customer. Since the annual education cycle means new potential customers every year, annual promotion—working to attract those customers—is a must.

- Identify the issues to be addressed by the marketing plan.
- Gain a better understanding of the actual situation in the school, its history and community.
- Try to understand where the school is in terms of culture, climate, leadership, staff, and image.





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- Establish values and formulate a clear vision.
- Try to get a better understanding of the specific product to market, in this case the French immersion program. Dual- and multi-track schools will have other "products" as well.
- Identify the positive elements to keep in the school and the program.
- Identify what to implement or change in the school and the program.
- Plan for improvements by clearly identifying achievable goals, things that can be reviewed and modified. Avoid becoming immediately overwhelmed by the need to change; start with two key elements.

Second, understand the target audience (the parents and students you want to attract) and their needs.

- Draw a demographic profile of the broadest potential community (Statistics Canada can provide information). This may be an exciting project to delegate to the school council.
- Ask questions within the learning community (of parents, teachers, support staff, students, etc.).
- Listen to and understand the expectations of the school's learning community.
- Ask tough questions and be open to the answers.
- Make a list of the kinds of information about the school and the French immersion program that parents need. (See pages 112–113.)

Third, identify and assemble the team: Who should be involved and what will be their role?

- Find out what support the jurisdiction can provide.
- Find out what the jurisdiction is doing to promote immersion and other programs and suggest any enhancements.
- Consider the role of school administrative and support staff, often the first to speak to prospective parents and students.
- Gain the support and commitment of the teachers.
- Involve parents in the planning and recognize that they may be the best promoters the school has.
- Consider involving current French immersion students as well as graduates.
- Look to the community for available support and assistance, such as universities and colleges, business community, local media, and local CPF chapters.

"Teachers are on the educational frontline and therefore critical to the success of the marketing approach. They must be educated in the objectives of the program and committed to its success. Use them to assist in the development of systems that will encourage families to give feedback and contribute ideas about how to enhance the value they receive."

Rick Parnell, "Marketing French Immersion in Alberta." Notes for presentation. *French Immersion Administrators' Workshop*, 2000.

The fourth step is to identify and plan strategies, activities and tools.

- Establish short- and long-term goals and ensure that progress can be measured.
- Inventory the available strategies, activities and tools—materials already being produced and activities already being carried out—that can be readily used or adapted.
- Consider and list new strategies, tools and activities.
- Remember to include strategies for both recruitment and retention and for both parents and students.
- Establish a budget.
- Establish a schedule.

Once the plans are complete, implement them and evaluate success regularly, making necessary adjustments, and celebrating the successes along the way.

### For More Information fmi

For another planning model and more ideas, see:

Lundrigan, Suzanne, Pierrette Messier Peet, and Carmen Mykula. "Program Promotion: Generating Interest and Involvement." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. (See Appendix F.)

## Promotional Activities and Tools

C

A changing population, more educational options, greater consciousness of choice, less restrictive school boundaries and per-pupil funding programs are all creating increased competition among schools and jurisdictions. In many cases, promotional activities and tools are already an entrenched aspect of a jurisdiction's or school's yearly plans.

Where promotion has been well thought out and strategically implemented, the results are invariably increased French immersion enrolments and satisfied administrators, students and parents.

What is some of the thinking that goes into these efforts and how does that translate into action?

Consider these questions:

- How do parents learn that a French immersion program exists in your jurisdiction? in your school?
- What is done to overcome the initial assumptions—such as French immersion is only for bright children, or I would have to speak French to help my child—that often stop parents from seeking more information about French immersion?
- If those assumptions are overcome and interest is piqued, how easy is it for parents to get more details? to get questions answered? to have their concerns allayed?
- What is done to help parents feel comfortable about the immersion approach?
- What is done to encourage older students to remain in the program? into junior high? into senior high?
- How is word-of-mouth encouraged and supported?

This section provides some suggestions that jurisdictions and schools use or could consider implementing to promote the French immersion program to parents and students (while, in most cases, promoting the jurisdiction, school and other programs as well).

In smaller jurisdictions and even in some larger ones, parents call the central office to inquire about French immersion rather than calling a specific school. Central office receptionists should have a basic understanding of the French immersion program, where it is offered and to whom to refer inquiries.



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**Make a Good First Impression**

The impression parents have of your school when they arrive for the first time will often influence their decision whether to register their child.

**Reception:** Your school secretary or receptionist is likely to be the first person to greet a visitor, either on the phone, in person or by e-mail. Be sure your receptionist is well informed about the school and its programs and that visitors receive a friendly greeting and helpful information. **In fact, school administrators may want to brief all staff on the French immersion program.**

A school brochure describing program choices and the special features of your school could be given to visitors.

Phone callers could be referred to your Web site for similar information or a school brochure could be mailed.

**Appearance:** Is your school attractive and welcoming? Do visitors know where to go when they arrive? Is the French immersion program visible to parents, such as signage or displays of students' work?

**Tours:** Treat parent and student visitors to your school like VIPs. Offer a tour of the school including immersion classrooms (in action), special classrooms such as computer and resource rooms, the gymnasium, the lunch room, etc. Encourage older immersion students to help with the tours. They are excellent ambassadors for the school and the program.

**Make Time:** Parents who stop by the school for information deserve your time and full attention. Offer them a private place to talk and a refreshment (for parents and children). Offer small children, who may accompany them, a pail of building blocks (jumbo sized for the little ones), or picture books, while you chat with the parents. Answer questions and provide written information where possible, such as your school brochure, copy of *What do I want for my child?* or *Yes, You Can Help!* (see Appendix A). Encourage them to phone or stop by again if they have further questions.

**Remember, one Kindergarten student gained and retained increases the enrolment in your school and/or jurisdiction for up to 13 years, Kindergarten through Grade 12!**

## Attracting Attention

Parents' and students' attention can be attracted through several routes: direct promotion by the school or jurisdiction, promotion through the community, and promotion through current and past immersion parents and students.

Suggestions for direct promotion by a school or jurisdiction:

- a jurisdiction brochure, introducing the French immersion program (and other programs of choice as well) made widely available in the community
- a school brochure (and don't forget the "What do I want for my child?" brochure)
- publicity materials produced in heritage languages common in your community
- newspaper advertisements or supplements delivered to homes (again, introducing programs of choice)
- public service (no cost) announcements placed on radio and TV
- the jurisdiction's and the school's Web site
- options on the student registration form
- large portable signs placed at schools or on the sides of major thoroughfares, billboards or banners

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- jurisdiction telephone receptionists and school secretaries should be aware of program choices and be able to offer information to inquirers or know where to direct queries
- school announcements inviting students to seek more information about late immersion or continuing immersion in junior and senior high school
- circulation of the school's annual report

Suggestions for involving the community:

- Welcome Wagon, the Chamber of Commerce and city/town publications and Web sites can advertise educational choices.
- Realtors should know about the educational choices offered in your school or jurisdiction. They are frequently the first contact newcomers have with the community.
- Posters, brochures or flyers can be sent to preschools, playschools and daycares, and placed in public health facilities, libraries and community centres frequented by parents of young children.
- Announcements can be placed on public notice boards and in church bulletins.
- The media can be invited to special celebrations at the school or to meet exchange students or attend some other equally newsworthy event.

Suggestions involving parents, students and graduates:

- human interest stories in community newspapers about students' or graduates' achievements, experiences, or aspirations
- participation in community parades, displays at trade fairs, and in malls
- displays of students' work at the library or mall
- parent-to-parent word-of-mouth
- local Canadian Parents for French (CPF) chapter support and materials

### Providing Program Details

Once parents' and students' attention has been obtained, a good promotional strategy will follow up by providing specific information. Again, the three routes of direct promotion by the jurisdiction or school, involvement of existing community resources and indirect promotion through current immersion parents and students can be used.

Providing detailed information directly by the school or jurisdiction is a mainstay of promotion. Ways to do this include:

- parent information nights
- school Open House or tours on request
- school newsletter articles
- providing Alberta Learning's *French Immersion Kindergarten: A Handbook for Parents* and/or *Yes, You Can Help!* (See pages 90–91 for ordering information.)
- newspaper supplements
- articles in community newsletters
- the jurisdiction's and school's Web site, including links to other sites such as Canadian Parents for French <www.cpf.ca>
- having well-informed teachers and school staff, including the school secretary

What do parents of young children need to understand about immersion to feel comfortable with the program?

- French immersion Kindergarten is no more stressful than English Kindergarten
- what it feels like to a 5-year-old to be in immersion
- English will be used to address their child's safety concerns
- their child will not be expected to speak French all of the time for the first couple of years
- literacy skills transfer between languages
- how to help with homework and support their child when they themselves are not proficient in French
- there is help if their child experiences difficulties
- the level of commitment and support they can expect from the education community
- where to get more information and support

- showing or circulating a video on French immersion: the benefits, how it works, a classroom in action, student and parent testimonials
- open houses for parents and students at the junior and senior high schools offering continuing immersion
- meet-your-fellow-student evenings in which immersion students from elementary or junior high schools can meet with immersion students in junior or senior high schools to learn more about the program at the next level and what the school has to offer

The community could be involved in several ways. Businessmen or bilingual adults, for example, could be invited to school meetings to talk about the value of learning French or their experiences in using French in their daily lives. Or, the school could provide speakers or detailed information for local radio and TV talk and community digest shows.

When using testimonials, quotes, or in other ways featuring students in media for public use (videos, brochures, Web pages, etc.), administrators in schools and jurisdictions must ensure that written parental consent has been received. Written consent of the individual is also required when quoting, filming or otherwise representing adults. School administrators are advised to consult school jurisdiction policies and to seek legal counsel as necessary.

Involving parents, students and graduates in providing more specific information includes:

- as speakers at parent information nights
- as speakers at school assemblies
- testimonials on videos
- as school tour guides
- as speakers at preschool meetings, service clubs, etc.
- parent-to-parent word-of-mouth
- local Canadian Parents for French (CPF) chapter support and materials

## Developing a Comfort Level

Even when parents and students are well informed, some doubts or discomfort may remain. In most cases, then, successful programs take the additional step of providing opportunities for parents and students to become more comfortable with choosing French immersion or continuing in the immersion program. Once again looking at the three routes, several suggestions can be made.

**Adopt a slogan and logo for your school:** A slogan and logo will help with recognition of your material and create a sense of pride among staff, students and parents. Use the slogan and logo on everything you produce. Consider a bilingual slogan.

Using direct promotional methods:

- workshops for parents, on a variety of related topics
- demonstration lessons for parents (have them experience a French immersion class of their own)
- opportunities for parents to observe and to be involved in the classroom and school
- different information sessions for parents as their children move through the grades
- French classes for parents
- information such as Alberta Learning's *French Immersion Kindergarten: A Handbook for Parents.* (See page 90 for ordering information.)

- a parents' collection of resources on French immersion, second language learning, parenting skills, etc.
- supportive teachers who understand and can respond to parents' concerns

Involving the community can take the form of inviting influential members of the community to visit the school and speak at meetings (talking about bilingualism and its benefits) or putting on events and celebrations in French that school families can participate in.

Involving parents, students and graduates can take several forms:

- "experienced" immersion parents as speakers at meetings
- students entertaining at community events
- older students and graduates speaking at meetings and visiting elementary and junior high schools

**Produce a video:** What better way to promote your school than through video? Tape typical school activities, "tour" the school, explain the advantages of each program and show them in action. Show students using French with ease in the classroom.

Show the video at information meetings and lend it to inquiring parents. Send copies to local media, such as your cable channel.

**Things to consider when organizing an information night for parents:**

- Why are we having an information meeting?
- When should the meeting be held to maximize attendance?
- Who is invited?
- How will we advertise?
- What should be included on the agenda?
- Who should be involved in the program?
- What should we place in the information package?

Local CPF chapters have access to a manual on how to organize a parent information night. Contact your local chapter or CPF Alberta at <cpfalta@cpfalta.ab.ca> or refer to the other contact information on page 142.

- parent-to-parent and student-to-student word of mouth
- ongoing support and information through the local Canadian Parents for French (CPF) chapter
- parents becoming members of Canadian Parents for French (CPF)

**Organize workshops for parents:** Well-informed parents mean an effective home-school relationship and more successful students. Offer workshops for parents on new curriculum, how to develop good study habits, etc. Consider the special needs of immersion parents who have little or no French language proficiency. See *Yes, You Can Help!* (Appendix A) for ideas.



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**Involve the parents:** One of your best marketing tools is satisfied clients, in this case parents and students. Word of mouth is a very effective way of promoting your school. Parents also often have skills or connections that may be helpful in realizing your promotional strategies: layout skills, graphic design, Web site development, printing services, media contacts, etc. Perhaps one of your parents would volunteer to write regular school news items for the local weekly paper or distribute brochures.

Quality programs and good marketing are intertwined. Even good programs can't afford to be complacent. French immersion student recruitment and retention must be part of the annual school cycle.

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# Addressing "Special Needs" in the French Immersion Program

The French immersion program is for students who want to learn French as their second language and, at the entry grade, is generally open to all children. (See Chapter 1, page 9 and *Yes, You Can Help!* p. 27.)

While students entering early immersion programs in the late 1970s and early 1980s may have been a relatively homogeneous group academically, today's early French immersion students have as wide a range of abilities and needs as students in regular English classrooms. Administrators and teachers of French immersion programs are regularly called upon to provide for the needs of students with behavioural, emotional, physical, and learning challenges as well as students who need an extra academic challenge.

Generally, progress has been made in accommodating students with behavioural, emotional and physical challenges within the French immersion classroom. However, there is often concern about accommodating students with learning challenges. In addition, the needs of exceptionally bright students are often wrongly assumed to have been met by the additional enrichment of learning a second language.

Research and experience demonstrate that, given the right circumstances, there are very few students who cannot benefit from the many advantages of studying in a French immersion program.

- From the earliest studies onward, researchers have found that the skills, knowledge, and attitudes achieved by immersion students compare favourably with their peers in both the English program and the francophone program (see Chapter 1, pages 10–11).
- Yet research also shows that the main reasons students transfer out of immersion programs relate to difficulties with subject content and behavioural and language problems.

How can immersion administrators reconcile these two statements? Perhaps by looking further into what is known about learning difficulties and enrichment in relation to French immersion, by examining their own attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to this knowledge, and by studying the experiences of others for what can be applied in their own schools and jurisdictions.

**A French Immersion Student Success Story**

Throughout elementary school, this student attended a single-track immersion school in Edmonton. After extensive testing in Grade 9, he was assessed as being dyslexic with dysgraphia. He went on to graduate from a single-track French immersion high school in 1996.

[In his own words]
"I had problems in reading and writing. In Grade 9, I was diagnosed with... a transference disability where I don't perceive what I read, and then I can't properly write down whatever I have in my thoughts. If it is verbal or if someone reads it to me, I can understand it a little better. When I found out about this, I figured, well, school is over....

But the French immersion program was incredible! The teachers were great.... By Grade 9, I had begun to have all of my exams scribed to me—read on an audiocassette and taken in a separate room. I understood the exam; I understood the content, but I still had the problem of writing. Again, the school jumped in and said...Here is a lap top computer. Here is a teacher that...[has been assigned to] write down what you are verbally telling them: the answers. Within the next year, I noticed that my marks had dramatically risen.

From there it just kept snowballing, and École J.H. Picard School, the administrators, the teachers did nothing but good things for me....

I went on to Grade 12 and still couldn't believe that after all those years of people saying "Ah, you're just lazy," or "Why don't you do your work?" it started to all come together.

...I graduated from École J.H. Picard School in 1996 with an average of 67%, and went on to Grant MacEwan College...."
—"Living the Dream." *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* 1999.



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## What is Known About Learning Difficulties in Relation to French Immersion

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While current knowledge and measurement do not allow the prediction of an individual's ability to succeed in a French immersion program, researchers and experienced practitioners have provided the following observations, conclusions and advice as a guide.

Students with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities will do as well academically in a French immersion program as they could be expected to do in an English program, if they receive the equivalent assistance and support provided to students in the English program. Indeed, most of these students' needs can be met within a French immersion program, allowing them to benefit from learning a second language. There are some circumstances, however, in which French immersion may not be advised.

Daniel Demers, a learning resource specialist and principal of a dual-track school in Coquitlam, British Columbia, advises, "[it] is important when making a decision to remember that, in many cases, a transfer to the native language program [English] will not lead to the elimination of the learning frustrations. Furthermore, it may have negative effects on an already fragile self-image.... We must remember, however, that in some cases, however few, a transfer to the English program would be beneficial...." —Daniel Demers, "Learning Disabilities and French Immersion: When to Transfer; When not to Transfer?" 1994, page 1. (See pages 133–135 for complete article.)

- **Deficiency in the child's first language**: Depending on the nature of the language deficiency, the outcomes may be poor for children whose development in their first language is weak. Since French immersion is a second language program, parents and educators must set realistic expectations for children with first language delays, speech impediments, and other communication difficulties. In severe cases, parents or educators may choose not to enrol a student in this program or, if discovered once already enrolled, may withdraw the student from the French immersion program.

- **Severe auditory challenges**: Because learning a language is very much an aural exercise, outcomes may be poor for students with auditory problems. In cases where the problem can be addressed with an appropriate intervention, the French immersion program can be considered as a viable educational option. However, where the child has severe auditory problems that cannot be rectified, parents may be advised to reconsider the French immersion program.

The French immersion program does not cause learning difficulties. In fact, some research indicates that second language study actually enhances learning. (See Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 34–36.) However, like some students in the English program, some students in the French immersion program experience challenges along the way. Sometimes these difficulties are simply the result of a slower rate of maturation, or the result of frustration on the part of an exceptionally bright child accustomed to understanding things quickly and easily. In other cases, students may experience difficulties related to transfer and interference from their first language. In still others, students may have specific learning disabilities. Administrators need to encourage early identification of problems when they do arise and assist the teacher to find ways to address them within the French immersion program rather than to counsel students out of the program as the first intervention.

Deficits relating to cognitive ability and academic skills are independent of the program in which the student is enrolled and the language in which the student studies. Accordingly, French immersion students who experience

difficulties in, for example, mathematics will not resolve these difficulties by transferring into the English program. In these cases, the students will simply transfer the learning difficulties into the English program. Researchers with extensive experience in both immersion and special education stress the importance of providing services to resolve such difficulties within French immersion programs rather than simply transferring these problems to the English program stream.

Each and every child experiencing difficulties should be assessed individually and decisions about interventions should be made in the best interests of the child, rather than of the program, the parents or the teachers. Decisions regarding interventions should be considered not only in light of the child's learning needs and the available supports, but also the child's happiness and self-esteem and the confidence of parents in their ability to support the child. All too often, transferring out of immersion is seen as the best solution. Setting aside the French aspects of the child's school experience, while considering how to address the learning problems the child is experiencing, is usually more helpful. (See Daniel Demers, "Learning Disabilities and French Immersion: When to Transfer; When not to Transfer?", pages 133–135 and Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 109–111.)

Parental support for and knowledge of the French immersion program and their children's education in general are important factors in any child's success. Children often reflect their parents' confidence or nervousness. Parents whose expectations of the program, or of their children, are unrealistic can undermine their children's motivation to learn. Parents who are well informed and confident about the program are more likely to work with the school to address any difficulties that arise. Administrators should encourage positive, two-way home-school communication and provide parents with information, support and reassurance. Alberta Learning's *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents* is an excellent handbook for French immersion parents. (See also Chapter 6.)

As the child enters secondary school, a continuing positive attitude toward the French immersion program is equally necessary for success. When educators and parents are confronted with an adolescent with negative attitudes toward the French immersion program, it becomes crucial to identify exactly the causes of the attitude in question. For example, a student experiencing social problems at school may identify the French immersion program as being the source when, in fact, it is the social structure within the school that is the issue. In light of this, when students express a desire to withdraw from the French immersion program, administrators will need to probe to identify the real issues.





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## What is Known About Gifted Students in Relation to French Immersion

- Intellectually gifted children learn more quickly, but may learn differently from other children.
- Teaching strategies for learners of normal intelligence are not always suitable for the level and ability of gifted students.
- Gifted students who are not being challenged by fast-paced, creative activities and engaged in higher-level thinking processes and assignments are underachievers.
- Gifted students who are not adequately and appropriately challenged may display behavioural or even academic difficulties.

These statements apply to students in the French immersion program just as they do to those in a regular English program. While many educators and parents may view learning a second language as a challenge, it is generally not enough of a challenge or the right kind of challenge to satisfy the needs of gifted students. These students will still require additional programming (in either French or English) to address their individual needs.

Janice A. Leroux offers the following thoughts:

> For some gifted students, the novelty of the second language will entice them to herculean efforts to achieve; for others who are talented in spatial or logical mathematical skills, the effort may result in frustration and self-doubt. The resource teacher must take the time to understand the students' various abilities and needs before planning relevant instructional strategies. ("Enrichment in the French Immersion Classroom," 1992, p. 8.)

She also advises that:

> The ability to demonstrate independent study skills and the level of proficiency in French will determine the depth and breadth of investigations that can be undertaken by students [in French]. A limited vocabulary can limit oral and written expressions. (Op cit, p. 8.)

In describing a program for the gifted at Stephen Leacock Public School (a dual-track school in the Ottawa area offering both early and late immersion options), Joan Sigler and Margaret Tourond share the following:

> One distinct advantage of the EFI [early French immersion] program over the LFI [late French immersion] program is that it gives students much more exposure to French, allowing them to become more proficient in the language.... This advantage applies to all students, but gifted students, because they learn more quickly, have additional time to perfect their language skills or to learn other skills. The "extra" time needs to be filled with options, which, in either language,

> require reflective, critical and creative thinking opportunities beyond those demanded in the regular [immersion] program. Students who enter the immersion program as LFI [late French immersion] students (grade 7) also need some of these enrichment opportunities....
> ("Teaching the Gifted in Immersion," *More French s'il vous plaît!* 1985, p. 68.)

> Different options for the gifted are offered at the Primary, Junior and Intermediate levels. Although formal identification procedures are not undertaken until the end of grade 3, we are aware of the research that shows that the abilities of gifted students decline if they are not challenged and used. Primary students need an enrichment program as much as Junior and Intermediate students.

Parents of gifted students should also be encouraged to provide extra challenges for their children, such as music lessons, volunteer activities, and access to advanced reading material.

## The School-based Team Approach to Addressing Special Needs

Learning difficulties come in a variety of forms and intensities. They may be handled as simply as providing catch-up time for a child having trouble with a mathematics concept, or as comprehensively as ensuring long-term intervention for a child with a serious learning disability. Enrichment programs can include both in-class and withdrawal solutions.

Whether attending to a student's learning difficulties or working to meet the needs of a gifted student, use a school-based team approach that allows for the collaboration of all stakeholders and outside experts in a systematic review and assessment process, and provides for a consistent implementation process. This approach ensures that the classroom teachers are involved at all times, provides for the regular sharing of information and understandings by all staff and specialists, and allows the classroom teachers to work with the resource room teacher and other staff and specialists to implement classroom strategies.

An example of a school-based team approach is clearly detailed by Daniel Demers in Appendix G "A Changing Perspective: Meeting the Needs of All Students." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*, 2000. Another example can be found in the experience of Queen Street Elementary School described in Appendix G "Learning Assistance Within French Immersion: The Experience of Two Districts."





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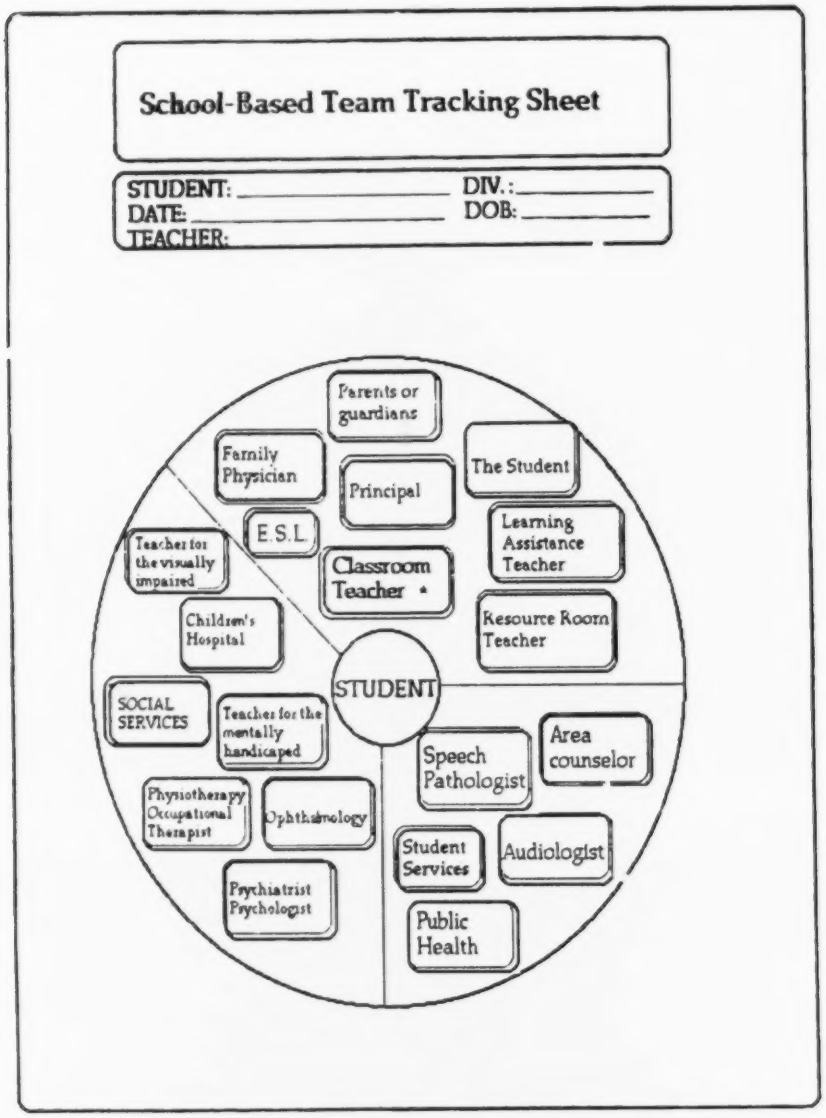
The diagram below provides an overview of what a school-based team could look like. Where the support comes from will depend upon the size of the community and school jurisdiction. Some services may have to be obtained through the nearest children's hospital or public health centre.




From: THIS KID IS BROKEN, FIX-IT ! How to change that approach. Daniel Demers District 43 B.C.

An overview of the approach is outlined as follows and can be adapted to particular situations.

## BE SYSTEMATIC AND CONSISTENT

A good way to avoid students falling between the proverbial "cracks" is to establish a simple and systematic school-based team process. Decisions should be taken following a collaborative process involving all stakeholders, especially the learner.

### STEP ONE

- Teachers', School's, Parents' or Student's observations of marked delays, "gap" between perceived potential and performance, certain level of frustration, changes/trauma, or inappropriate behaviors.

This step leads to: *1) initial conversations with the child and his or her family; 2) classroom Interventions and support using some accommodations & more systematic data collection; 3) informal discussions with the previous year's teacher(s) and a visit to the student's file is professional and will save time*. If problems persist, a formal request is made by the classroom teacher for a school-based team collaboration.

### STEP TWO

- School-based team collaboration.
- Sharing of information and data collected as well as the results of initial interventions.
- Identify strengths and remember them when designing interventions.
- Make responsible assessment and evaluation decisions to quantify and qualify delays in order to begin interventions a.s.a.p.
- Decide if modifications or adaptations of learning outcomes from the curriculum are necessary.
- Set short timelines and always follow up.

This step usually provides short term interventions/support for the student, the teacher and the parents. It should involve all stake holders and provide realistic timelines to review and assess interventions. It usually qualifies and somewhat quantifies the "gap". Most importantly, it will provide guidance for the individualized interventions and support necessary for the student, teacher and parent team. Involve the student as much as possible and always inform the parents.

### STEP THREE

- Assessment of the results of the interventions and accommodations put in place in Step Two with the school-based team.
- Identify any need for further modifications or adaptations to curriculum learning outcomes or program.
- Identify need for further assessment including full psychometric evaluation.
- Repeat steps One and Two with systematic support, review and evaluate.

1) Avoid trying to "fix" everything at once; 2) set small goals and review often; 3) always try to answer the question: *What should the child, teacher or parents do starting now?* 4) make assessment decision to assist the design of interventions rather than to label the learner; 5) involve the child as often as possible; remember to celebrate successes and to use strengths whenever possible to remediate content gaps.

A Systematic Approach to Special Education – Demers, 1999

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## For More Information

Demers, Daniel. "A Changing Perspective: Meeting the Needs of All Students." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 105–145. (See Appendix G.)

Mayne, Lise, and Wayne Hampton. "Understanding the French Immersion Teacher: Implications for Training, Hiring, Supervising, and Supporting Your French Immersion Staff." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 253–264. (See Appendix E.)

Mykula, Carmen, Anne Shillington, and Angèle Aubin. "Learning Assistance Within French Immersion: The Experiences of Two Districts." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report*. Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, pp. 225–239. (See Appendix G.)

## Available Resources

While providing services and support in French is preferable, it is not always possible. This should not be a deterrent to meeting the needs of French immersion students. Because most learning difficulties are not language specific and children transfer strategies from one language to the other, assistance can be provided in English where necessary. (See Chapter 2, page 27, and Appendix A *Yes, You Can Help!* pp. 109–110.) However, it is vital for all team members to work together and to have an understanding of how immersion works and of second language learning processes. (See also Appendix G "Learning Assistance Within French Immersion: The Experience of Two Districts".)

There exist few standardized tools that can be used without carefully considering the factors inherent in the French immersion context that may affect the interpretation of student results. In addition to tests, the team may want to seek professional help to gain a better understanding of the particular issue at hand and, further, to gain a better understanding of how best to support the particular needs of a particular individual French immersion student.

### Standardized Testing Tools and Other Resources

The following standardized tests are often used for assessing students in French immersion programs. These instruments are not available in French. Best practice suggests, however, that tests should be administered in the student's mother tongue while exercising caution in interpreting results.

Interpretations must acknowledge the unique features of the French immersion learning environment, such as learning to read in French before being formally taught to read in English.

For a guide to interpreting and designing interventions, see Appendix G Daniel Demers, "A Changing Perspective: Meeting the Needs of All Students." *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000, p. 110.

**Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Third Edition (WISC-III)**

The WISC-III is a revision of the WISC-R, which was one of the most popular and most widely used individual intelligence tests. The WISC-III is used with children from 6 to 16 years old and of the three scales listed here is the most used in schools. This test is based on the concept of global intelligence. In other words, intelligence is viewed as a multifaceted concept as opposed to a single entity.

**Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III)**

The PPVT-III is an extremely popular, individually administered instrument that measures an individual's receptive language ability. According to the authors, the PPVT-III can be considered a measure of hearing vocabulary and a screening test of verbal ability. The test is both easy and quick to administer. It has two forms (A and B) that can be used with individuals from ages 2 1/2 to over 90.

**Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests—Revised (WRMT-R)**

The WRMT-R is designed for individuals ages 5 to 75 and older. According to the author, the WRMT-R can be used for a variety of reasons including diagnosis of reading problems, program planning, and program evaluation. The tests are designed for both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced purposes, although their use as a criterion-referenced tool is somewhat limited.

[The following documents have been developed in whole or in part by French Language Services Branch, Alberta Learning for use by personnel working in French immersion schools. As such, they are available in French only. However, an English version of the annotation has been provided for the administrator with little or no proficiency in French.]

***Coli : Ensemble d'outil d'observation et d'intervention en lecture (1996)*** **[LRC product # 313247 and 313271]**

*Bien que le document* Coli *n'ait pas été développé spécifiquement pour l'adaptation scolaire, il peut servir d'outil diagnostique afin d'évaluer les compétences et le niveau d'apprentissage des élèves d'immersion de la maternelle à la neuvième année.*

Although this document was not specifically developed for special needs, it can be used as a diagnostic tool for immersion students from Kindergarten through Grade 9 to evaluate the grade level at which the student is functioning.




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***Guide de l'éducation pour les élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux (1997)*** <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/french/adt_scol/default.asp>

*Ce document renferme les lignes directrices à suivre en matière d'adaptation scolaire aussi bien pour les écoles francophones que celles de l'immersion. Ce document sera disponible en anglais en 2003.*

This document suggests different ways to address the needs of special needs learners in a French immersion setting. This document is being reviewed, with an English language version available in 2003.

***Le plan d'intervention personnalisé (1998)*/Individualized Program Plans (1998) [LRC product #373316]**

*Ce document peut servir de référence aux écoles francophones et d'immersion pour élaborer un plan d'intervention personnalisé. Ce document est disponible en anglais.*

This document assists teachers and other professionals to prepare an individualized program plan (IPP).

***Enseigner aux élèves ayant des troubles émotionnels et (ou) des psychopathologies (2000)*/Teaching Students with Emotional Disorders and/or Mental Illnesses (2000) [LRC product #428765]**

*Ce document d'appui informe les enseignants francophones et d'immersion sur six troubles émotionnels que peuvent rencontrer certains élèves. Le document renferme également une foule de stratégies d'intervention adaptées à la salle de classe. Ce document est disponible en anglais.*

This support document provides information for French immersion teachers and professionals on common emotional disorders. In addition, the document provides a wealth of strategies for working with students with emotional disorders in regular classroom settings.

***Modèle d'intervention progressive conçue pour offrir des services éducatifs particuliers aux élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux (2001)***

*Ce document d'appui a été conçu pour tout le personnel scolaire (francophone ou immersion) afin que le personnel se situe par rapport aux démarches à suivre lorsqu'un élève présente des besoins spéciaux. Ce document est disponible uniquement en français.*

This support document provides a step-by-step approach to guide educational personnel working with special needs students in providing required intervention at critical moments. To date, this document is only available in French and is included in Appendix G for ease of access.

***Enseigner aux élèves ayant des troubles d'apprentissage (2002)* [LRC product #463406]/Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities (2001)**

*Ce document d'appui informe les enseignants francophones et d'immersion sur les troubles d'apprentissage. Le document renferme une foule de stratégies adaptées à la salle de classe. Ce document est disponible en français et en anglais.*

This support document provides an overview of learning disabilities and a wealth of strategies for working with students with learning disabilities.

***Enseigner aux élèves doués et talentueux (2002)* [LRC product #471665]/ Teaching Students Who are Gifted and Talented (2002) [LRC product #415283]**

*Ce document d'appui informe les enseignants francophones et d'immersion sur la douance. Le document renferme également une foule de stratégies adaptées à la salle de classe. Ce document est disponible en français et en anglais.*

This support document provides an overview of the gifted and talented student. It provides a wealth of strategies for working with these students.

***Réussir ses études au secondaire (2000)* [available at LRC fall 2002]/ Make School Work for You (2002) [LRC product #470948]**

*Ce document s'adresse aux élèves francophones et d'immersion de niveau secondaire. Le document contient une foule de stratégies pratiques pour aider l'élève à réussir ses études.*

This document is specifically intended for the high school French immersion student. It provides an overview of excellent study skills as well as strategies for succeeding as a student.

## Human Resources/Specialists

When trying to assess special needs students and when establishing a learning environment that will permit these students to succeed in the French immersion program, administrators may want to involve the following experts on the team—in addition to themselves and classroom teachers. These additional resources will provide some unique points of view and understandings.

- **Parents:** Being the student's first educators, parents can provide invaluable insights about their child. In addition to this, educators can also gain some insights into the environment of that child; which can have a big influence on the child's school achievement. Well-informed and supported parents are educators' best allies in supporting and working with children with special needs.

"The study also measured the impact of family life on academic achievement. There were the usual findings that children from two-parent families have an advantage over those from single-parent families and that higher socio-economic status is linked with higher scores. But the report also shows that attitudes toward academics in the home play a huge role. A challenging curriculum and standardized tests can help, but if parents don't support students at home, they won't learn as much."

Source: "Alberta Teens Top Worldwide Literacy Test." *Globe and Mail*, December 5, 2001, p. A3.



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- **Special education consultant:** Some school jurisdictions have a special education consultant. When this is the case, it is important to ascertain this individual's training and experience with the French immersion program and more importantly, his or her knowledge of how students learn in this program. Caution must be exercised when generalizing or transferring learning theory from research and experience in a regular English language program or English as a Second Language program to the French immersion setting. However, a special education consultant with post-secondary training in Special Education and experience in this setting can be an invaluable support.

- **Hearing consultant:** Because of the oral/aural nature of the French immersion setting, working with a hearing consultant, especially in the early years of the program, may prove to be a wise investment. Children with uncorrected hearing difficulties may experience difficulty with understanding and following in class and more severe cases may have difficulty with their French language pronunciation.

- **Speech and Language Pathologist:** Each language has its own pronunciation, sounds, rhythms, inflections, and so on. Consequently, not all speech difficulties transfer from one language to another. An English-speaking speech therapist will be able to help with difficulties in the English language and may be able to assist with certain other difficulties. However, if the problems are occurring in the French language, a speech therapist with expertise in the French language will be best able to help teachers identify students' difficulties as well as provide teachers and parents with effective strategies to overcome them. In addition to this, administrators might consider asking a speech pathologist to lead a professional development day to share strategies that would assist teachers in ensuring that students, especially at the secondary level, maintain the excellent French language pronunciation acquired to date.

- **Audiologist:** Once a child with a potential hearing difficulty has been identified, the audiologist will complete the diagnosis as well as recommend appropriate intervention. This may include surgery to correct a physiological problem, the prescription of a hearing device, or strategies for working with the learner with a hearing problem.

- **Chartered psychologist:** A chartered psychologist with knowledge and experience with students enrolled in a French immersion program is a valuable resource. Because few of the instruments used to measure and assess students, especially when used during the Kindergarten through Grade 3 years, were normed on French immersion populations, the interpretation of results on these various instruments becomes problematic. To illustrate, many French immersion students do not begin formal instruction in English language arts until Grade 3. Caution must therefore be exercised when interpreting data provided by an instrument that asks the primary school student to read in order to provide a response.


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## Program Approaches

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Examples of two different approaches used in Alberta schools to support students with special needs are provided in Appendix G "Learning Assistance Within French Immersion: The Experience of Two Districts."

## When Transferring to the English Program is All That Remains

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The following article has been reprinted with permission from CPF Manitoba News, February 1994.

# Learning Disabilities and French Immersion: When to Transfer; When not to Transfer?

By: Daniel Demers

We all wish for the magic formula or test that would provide us with an objective answer to the question of potential success in the French Immersion program. The fact remains that each and every case has to be evaluated individually. Although this evaluation can be quite subjective, there is a systematic way to look at available information and make an informed decision on the subject.

To start with, look at the child from a subjective perspective and go through a checklist of what I have found to characterize successful and unsuccessful students in French Immersion. By going down this list I can come up with a profile that can quite accurately predict how well the child will succeed in this fairly demanding program. However, this by itself does not mean that a change of placement will give the desired results. *(see list on page four).*

Any decision to change the placement of a child must be in the interest of the child, not of the program, the parents or the teachers.

It is important when making a decision to remember that in many cases, a transfer to the native language program will not lead to the elimination of the learning frustrations. Furthermore, it may have negative effects on an already fragile self-image. Our objective is to strive to service all students in the second language. We must, however, remember that in some cases, however few, a transfer to the English program would be beneficial and would reduce some of the debilitating frustrations felt by some leaders. The question here is who do we transfer, why and when? *(con't page 4)*

"When a decision for transfer is finally made, it must be recognized that this decision opens a whole set of immediate needs on the part of the student, the student's family, the French immersion school, and the school which will ultimately receive the child.... In particular, the needs of the child are of paramount importance in this situation. Everything possible must be done to ensure the child's sense of security and comfort, and a smooth adaptation to her/his new school."
—Sallie Boschung and Nicole Roy, "Issue Surrounding Transfer out of French Immersion: A Literature Review." *APPIPC Conference*, Nanaimo, 1996, published as Appendix A of Nicole Roy, "French Immersion Support Documents and A Model for Transfer to the English Program." Vancouver: Vancouver School Board, 1997.



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## Characteristics of Second Language Learning

First of all, we must identify the characteristics of the second language acquisition, to understand and appreciate the difficulties this learner must face and overcome. This information can then be used to modify existing programs, design measuring tools that will identify, evaluate and assist in the early detection of the difficulties and develop the appropriate remediation programs to assist students. Language acquisition is an ongoing process, and usually imply life-long refinements. Focus on the learner, anticipate deficiencies and promote meta-cognitive process of acquisition and memory organization for a more efficient recall of stored knowledge.

Although it is assumed that there are underlying deficient skills in students with learning disabilities, we must use caution in the testing of this population. One thing is certain, the protocol for evaluation of a learning disabled child in the French Immersion program will differ from the evaluation of the regular program students or the francophone students. No one appears to have the magic answer as to what tool to use. Each and every case warrants a different protocol of evaluation. The wrong diagnosis will lead to inefficient remedial methods and become only a waste of precious time for both the teacher and the student. It remains that, to accurately test the French Immersion students, we need more research specific to the assessment of that bilingual population. Valid and reliable assessment would need to account for the relative importance and possible interactions of cognitive and linguistic variables across language. It would also need to include developmental aspects of age related variables. Since none of the French only tests or the English only tests seem to reliably inform us of the deficiencies of the immersion students over time (Lapkin, 1984) we must be careful not to label a child with the inappropriate measure.

Some delays are expected in French Immersion programs, particularly in areas such as English spelling. However, researchers such as Genesse (1979) believe that the gap is narrowed by grade 5 or 6. These delays show in the testing as deficiencies, not as delays. When a model of evaluation becomes available, it will become much easier to set remedial instruction objectives and easier to attain them. Meanwhile, *strategy teaching* can alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by learners in the French Immersion program.

## Who Should Transfer?

Are there certain students that would benefit from a transfer to the regular English programs? The answer to this question is certainly **yes**. But who? When? And who decides? Sometimes, the answer is **no**! Now the BIG question: which ones should remain and which ones should be transferred? The preceding information has provided us with the profile of a learner that would experience incredible stress in French immersion: an auditorily deficient student.

Prior to making such an important (and usually irreversible) decision, one must evaluate many facets of a child's profile. A good indicator of potential success of a child in second language acquisition has always been the level of **competence in the child's native language** (L1). The acquisition of a second language (L2) is facilitated by the systems established when language was originally developed by the learner in L1. These skills are then used to transfer and make generalizations in L2 acquisition and language development in general. If L1 is weak to start with, the acquisition of L2 will be affected in so far as building on a weak base leads to a shaky structure. This further highlights the importance of parental involvement in pre-school activities such as interactive reading and natural oral correction in the child's first language.

A second measure, one often overlooked by the schools and the parents of LD children, is the actual **level of frustration** that a student exhibits in his or her learning environment. An unmotivated child is often a frustrated learner.

Then, there is the decision to transfer a child, based on the belief that he or she will do better in the alternative

| The successful student in French Immersion | The unsuccessful student in French Immersion |
|---|---|
| • is verbal, likes to talk | • is often a reluctant speaker |
| • imitates easily | • imitates with difficulty |
| • self-corrects | • doesn't notice errors |
| • experiments without fear of making mistakes | • often fears making mistakes |
| • is exposed to many models of good modeling (at home, in the community and in school) | • poor modeling environment (at home,in the community and in school) |
| • readily accepts challenges | • has a defeatist attitude |
| • shows strengths in first language | • often has poor first language skills |
| • trusts | • mistrusts |
| • is usually attentive and focussed | • often is inattentive and unfocussed |
| • is willing | • is often unwilling |
| • has good auditory discrimination | • has poor auditory discrimination |
| • has good memory and good meta-cognitive awareness | • has poor memory and poor meta-cognitive awareness |
| • has determined parental support and convinced parents | • often has unconvinced parents, and unprepared or unwilling to help |




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program. This can prove to be a grave error. I have often seen the learning disabled child perform no better in the English program even after going through the trauma and personal embarrassment of the transfer.

## Profile of the Frustrated Learner

There seems to be **a student with a particular profile** that tends to do poorly in French Immersion, This learner tends to be less frustrated after a transfer in the English program. It is therefore important to discuss this learner before making a final decision.

Strengths or weaknesses in certain abilities can be good predictors to identify potential stresses or facilities to be encountered in the acquisition of a second language. When the difficulties have been identified as being mainly in the 'performance' tests, we find that the students with these profiles usually show no major improvements when transferred into the English Program if their school has a French learning remedial center. It is believed that students with a test profile showing verbal strengths, in areas such as short term memory, reasoning and auditory skills, and showing lower scaled scores on other measures such as visual comprehension, perception and other visual and performance focus, can usually work successfully in a modified French Immersion program with remediation sessions, in either a pull-out or in-class support service with an individualized educational program (IEP). Our candidate for transfer to the English program is a student with low scores in the area of verbal and auditory sub-tests of psycho-metric measures. Although this is certainly no magic test, it appears to reduce the inappropriate transfer and gives some of our less gifted learners a chance to achieve functional bilingualism. This method applies mainly to schools that provide learning assistance services (*l'orthopédagogie*) in French and in English. **Without the proper support services, the learning disabled student will be unable to remediate and circumvent some of his learning disabilities.**

In conclusion, there appears to be three main indicators, to look at, or evaluate, before transferring or enrolling a student with learning disabilities in or out of a French Immersion program. **First**, a subjective review of the successful and non successful characteristics list, with the goal, amongst others, of establishing the level of success the student has achieved in his or her own native language. **Secondly**, the personal dedication and motivation of the student, not the parents, to be in, or to remain in the program. **Finally**, certain students with learning disabilities can still be successful in the French Immersion Program, without undue frustrations, if their learning disabilities fit a certain profile. This profile puts their learning disabilities, or their poor scores on testing mainly in the area of non verbal and non auditory sub-tests. Testing for auditory discrimination is critical in second language assessments. We can only imagine the stress one would experience when dealing with a program that relies, almost exclusively, for the first few years, on oral communication, sound discrimination and sound production when the child experiences auditory dysfunction.

## Importance of Learning Style and Self-Image

Finally, we must remember that the remediation of learning disabled students must include *the teaching of coping strategies and skills* that they will need to deal with their learning disabilities and the unusual way they have to learn and memorize language concepts. We all know, learning disabilities don't go away, but when the appropriate training or re-education is done, many learning disabled students can circumvent their problems, by using alternative learning strategies. One more important thing to remember, is their memory and recall difficulties. It varies greatly from child to child, from mild recall impairment to severe deficiencies. This issue must be addressed in the design of each and every individualized educational program. If our goal is to keep the students in the program, we must create remediation programs that address the learning process using curricula as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Chances are that if we create success for them, they will remain in the programs.

The most important issue is, of course, *the self-image of the child.* This must be addressed to ensure good motivation levels, and constant effort from the learner. It is also important to discuss, in realistic terms, the actual concept of learning disabilities with the students. We should also educate the students and the teachers of our schools about learning disabilities and the learning disabled learner. I have seen the sigh of relief of so many students when they find out that having a learning disability does not mean they are stupid, thus clearing the way for successful remediation. Self-evaluations and close scrutiny of individuals can often uncover underlying strengths, which in turn can be used to great advantage. These strengths have a two-fold advantage, they perform great magic in building self-image, and, the strengths can often be used to deal with some of the weaknesses.

We often believe that all our students should be performing at the same level. This belief is certainly not limited to the French Immersion classes. Let's carefully consider the learner before making far -reaching decisions.

*"Imagine how quiet the forest would be if only the best birds sang".*

### About the Author:

*Daniel Demers is a specialist in learning disabilities at Glenayre Elementary School in Port Moody, B.C. He holds a Bachelor of Education degree with a triple minor in French, Psychology and Learning Disabilities. He has worked with learning disabled students for the past six years, and also taught a special summer programs in Organizational Skills. He is currently undertaking a M.Ed. in Curriculum and Development in the field of Learning Disabilities at UBC. He has lectured, and given workshops to parents and teachers across the country. He has also piloted many new programs in the bilingual learning resource center of his school.*

***Note from the Editor:*** The above article is a summary of an original 6000 word article.The complete original article plus bibliography can be obtained from Canadian Parents for French (MB) 222-6535 / or the Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba (LDAM) 774-1821.

## For More Information

Alberta Learning. *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents.* Revised Edition. Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002, pp. 104–113. (Appendix A)

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## References

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Leroux, Janice A. "Enrichment in the French Immersion Classroom." *Contact* 11, *1*, (February 1992), pp. 7–9.

Roy, Nicole. "French Immersion Support Documents and A Model for Transfer to the English Program." Vancouver: Vancouver School Board, 1997.

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# 10 French Language Studies Beyond Grade 12

Information about the many opportunities to continue to learn and use French beyond high school is important to parents and students both as a demonstration of the value of learning French and as motivation to continue in a French immersion program to the end of Grade 12. Alberta alone has a growing array of post-secondary opportunities.

Alberta Learning offers fellowships for full-time, post-secondary studies in French. Applications are due in mid November. See <www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships/info.asp?EK=23>.

See also page 43 for information on the Summer Language Bursary Program.

## University of Alberta

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***Faculté Saint-Jean*** is a faculty of the University of Alberta, which offers the opportunity to study in a unique bilingual environment. It offers French language instruction in BA, BEd, and BSc programs, a Master of Education—Educational Studies in Language and Culture, Diploma Programs in Education, and pre-professional programs.

- A BA with specialization program offers the opportunity to focus on Canadian Studies, Social-political Sciences, French Language and Literature, or Interdisciplinary Studies.
- The Bachelor of Commerce (Bilingual) degree is a collaborative effort between the University of Alberta School of Business and *Faculté Saint-Jean*.
- A partnership implemented in 2000 by Faculté Saint-Jean and the Faculty of Engineering allows engineering students to complete their first year in French at *Faculté Saint-Jean*.
- Third and fourth year students registered in the arts, commerce, or education programs can choose to study for one semester in France.
- Information on almost $50,000 in bursaries and scholarships is available by phoning (780) 465–8700, 1–800–537–2509.



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For further information:
Phone: (780) 465–8700, 1–800–537–2509
Fax: (780) 465–8760
Web site: <www.fsj.ualberta.ca>

**The Division of Romance Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics** offers a variety of French language and literature courses. Third year undergraduates may also choose to study in Dijon, France.

For further information:
Phone: (780) 492-3272
E-mail: <mlcs@ualberta.ca>
Web site: <www.humanities.ualberta.ca/MLCS/Romance_Languages/Romance.html>

**Faculty of Education** offers courses leading to core (FSL) teaching.

For further information:
**Web site:** <http://www.education.ualberta.ca>

## Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)

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**NAIT** offers a full-time, two-year diploma program in *Administration des Affaires* (Business Administration), with the option to specialize in Accounting, Finance, Management, or Marketing.

Also available are evening courses in Business Communications and Marketing.

For further information:
Phone: (780) 471-7033
E-mail: <arianea@nait.ab.ca>
Web site: <www.nait.ab.ca/PCalendars/SearchArea/ProgramFBU.asp>

## University of Calgary

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**The French Language Instruction Program, *Centre français*** offers a variety of courses at the undergraduate level taught in French through the faculties of social sciences, humanities, and science as well as a *Certificat d'études françaises*.

For further information:
Phone: (403) 220-4000
E-mail: <flip@ucalgary.ca>

**The Department of French, Italian, and Spanish** offers a variety of language and literature courses.


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For further information:
Web site: <www.fis.ucalgary.ca/fisweb/>

**The Faculty of Education** offers teacher education courses, including an opportunity to participate in an exchange with students in France, who are training to become teachers.

For further information:
Web site: <www.educ.ucalgary.ca>

## University of Lethbridge

**The Department of Modern Languages** offers courses in language, culture, literature and linguistics.

For further information:
Phone: (403) 329-2560
Fax: (403) 329-5187
E-mail: <louise.shannon@uleth.ca>
Web site: <home.uleth.ca/mod/>

**The Faculty of Education** offers courses leading to teaching French.

For further information:
Web site: <www.edu.uleth.ca/>

## Athabasca University

**Athabasca University** offers distance education in French, including a home-study course in written and oral communications for business purposes (FREN 387).

For further information:
Phone: 1–800–788–9041
Web site: <www.athabascau.ca/>

## Community Colleges

Many community colleges throughout Alberta have French departments or offer French courses.

For further information:
<www.mtroyal.ab.ca/programs/arts/languages/french.htm>
<www.rdc/ab/ca>
<www.gprc.ab.ca>
<www.gmcc.ab.ca>

For complete links, see
<www.edc.gov.ab.ca/college/postsecsystem/postsecinst/postsecinst.asp>




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## Elsewhere in Canada

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Information on a wide variety of post-secondary and other opportunities to continue to learn and use French is available on line at:
<www.oise.utoronto.ca/~mpress/eduweb/eduweb.html>
<www.pch.gc.ca>
<www.cpf.ca/English/Students/index.htm>
<www.langcanada.net>

### For More Information

Alberta Learning. *Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents.* Revised Edition. Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002, pp. 125–129. (See Appendix A.)


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# 11 Support Agencies and What They Offer

## Canadian Parents for French (CPF)

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### Background

CPF was founded in 1977 by English-speaking parents attending a national conference on French language and exchange opportunities. It has been a driving force behind the popularity and growth of French immersion and has strongly supported the significant improvements that have been made to core French. Today, CPF members from St. John's to Port Alberni to Yellowknife are working to ensure that all young Canadians have opportunities to learn and use French as a second language.

### Mission

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is the national network of volunteers which values French as an integral part of Canada and which is dedicated to the promotion and creation of French second language learning opportunities for young Canadians.

### Organizational Structure and Membership

CPF was established as a three-tiered organization to reflect the levels of decision-making which affect the availability and quality of French second language programs.

National, the umbrella association, works at the federal/national level to pursue its goals. The branches, the provincial/territorial associations, represent their members to provincial decision-makers and other stakeholder groups and provide programs and service to their chapters and members. The Alberta Branch was incorporated as a non-profit society in 1978 and has been a registered charity since 1983. Activities are the responsibility of three full-time staff members based in offices in Edmonton and Calgary. Chapters, the local level of CPF, work within communities to promote and support French second language learning opportunities. There are more than 20 local chapters throughout Alberta. A volunteer board of directors, elected at large from among its members, leads each level.



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Membership in CPF is open to any adult who supports the goals of the association. Members receive the national, branch, and chapter newsletters, have access to designated parts of the national Web site, can participate in CPF meetings and events, and have the right to vote and hold office.

A school, jurisdiction or organization (such as a school council) can become an associate member of CPF to receive information and endorse and support the goals of CPF. An Associate Member Organization receives ten copies of all newsletters, has access to protected sections of the national Web site, and may send representatives to meetings but has no right to vote.

## CPF and the School Administrator

CPF's services and activities support French and immersion programs, students, parents, and staff in a variety of ways:

- advocating for supportive policies and adequate funding and resources
- informing the community about the value of and opportunities for learning French (pamphlets, posters, information meetings, speakers, displays, news releases, etc.)
- sponsoring, organizing, and sharing information about extra- and co-curricular activities for students
- supporting parents by providing information, sharing ideas, and addressing their concerns from the preschool to the post-secondary level (newsletters, Web sites, information meetings, responding to enquiries, etc.)
- serving as a clearinghouse of information about French second language learning (research, resources, statistics, etc.)
- developing links with Alberta Learning, *l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta*, Alberta Home and School Councils' Association, Alberta School Boards Association, Alberta Teachers' Association, College of Alberta School Superintendents, and the universities.

Teachers and administrators can support CPF and make it even more effective by:

- encouraging parents to become members
- taking out an associate membership on behalf of the school
- coordinating your efforts with those of your local CPF chapter
- sharing information with CPF about your programs: successes and challenges, ideas and resources

### For further information

or to contact the nearest local chapter:

Canadian Parents for French, Alberta Branch
9852A - 33 Ave.
Edmonton, AB T6N 1C6
Phone (780) 433–7311, 1–888–433–6036
Fax (780) 433–7306
E-mail: <cpfaltaedmonton@cpfalta.ab.ca>
Alberta Web site: <www.cpfalta.ab.ca>
National Web site: <www.cpf.ca>


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# Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA)

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## Background

The Alberta Home and School Councils' Association is a provincial association of parents and community supporters, who are committed to enhancing student success through meaningful involvement in children's education and schooling. Its members work to have a positive influence on education at local (through school councils), jurisdictional, and provincial (through the AHSCA) levels.

Since 1929, the AHSCA has been an affiliate of the Canadian Home and School Federation. In 1991, the name was changed from "Alberta Home and School Federation," to "Alberta Home and School Councils' Association." The new name maintained the link to school-based parent groups operating under various names (home and school associations, parent advisory councils, parent-teacher associations, etc.), while addressing the 1988 *School Act* amendments that made school councils possible.

Since 1994 and the mandating of school councils through further revisions to the Alberta *School Act*, the AHSCA has expanded its role to promote and support strong school communities with effective school councils that facilitate collaboration among the school's partners in order to enhance student learning.

From 1995 to 1998, membership in the AHSCA has doubled, to approximately 500 school groups. The AHSCA serves as the provincial advocate for over 100,000 parents across Alberta, working in partnership with 480 trustees serving school boards, and the 44,000 teachers represented by the Alberta Teachers' Association.

## Mission

The Alberta Home and School Councils' Association is the voice of parents and families committed to the best possible education for Alberta children, so that they may reach their potential and participate in society in a meaningful and responsible way.

## Organizational Structure and Membership

The AHSCA is a non-profit organization. Aside from minimal staff, the AHSCA is run by volunteer parents, with Board representation from all corners of the province. Its small provincial office is located in the Alberta School Boards Association building in Edmonton.

The association's membership consists mainly of school-based parent groups, who are represented through their school councils. Membership is optional, renewed annually, and is held by the school council, on behalf of all the parents of children attending that school. Individual parent memberships are also available.




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### The AHSCA and the School Administrator

The association provides the resources and services to parents and school councils that provide parents with information, skills and insights to work effectively as partners in education.

Networking resources and services include:
- "Staying Connected to Support One Another"
- "Parent-to-Parent Networking Services"
- referrals to educational resources
- affiliation with other Canadian Home and School Federation members

Information and education resources:
- "Staying Informed to Be Effective Partners"
- toll free information line: 1–800–661–3470 (in Alberta)
- information and advice provided by well informed Board and staff
- monthly newsletters and bulletins—AHSCA News and Parents' Provincial Perspectives
- "School Council Resource Manual"
- "Checklist for School Council Effectiveness"
- "Shared Purpose for Learning Workbook"
- presentations and information sessions
- annual parent conference
- workshops on parental involvement as partners in education, on school councils, in school communities, and at home.

For further information
or to contact a regional board member:

The Alberta Home and School Councils' Association
#1200, 9925 – 109 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2J8
Phone: (780) 454–9867, 1–800–661–3407
Fax: (780) 455–0167
Web site: <www.ahsca.ab.ca>

## Alberta School Boards' Association for Bilingual Education (ASBABE)

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### Background

The Alberta School Boards' Association for Bilingual Education was established in 1978 to embrace the issues and needs surrounding French immersion and French as a second language programs. In 1999 its scope was broadened to include all languages in Alberta.

### Mission

ASBABE is committed to all language development and promotion in the province of Alberta, by communicating and working with students, parents, teachers, administrators and government representatives.

### Organizational Structure and Membership

ASBABE is a province-wide organization of representatives from school jurisdictions. Membership is open to all school boards who are members of the Alberta School Boards Association. ASBABE is governed by an elected Executive and two appointed directors-at-large.

For further information

Alberta School Boards' Association for Bilingual Education
#1200, 9925 – 109 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2J8
Phone: (780) 482–7311

## Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL)

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### Mission

As an agent of change and an ombudsman, the Commissioner of Official Languages has been mandated to take all measures intended to ensure that the three main objectives of the *Official Languages Act* are met, namely:

- the equality of English and French in Parliament, within the Government of Canada, the federal administration and institutions subject to the *Act*;
- the preservation and development of official language communities in Canada; and
- the equality of English and French in Canadian society.

### Structure and Activities

Although based in Ottawa, the Commission also has five regional offices: Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton. There are a Commissioner's Representative, investigators and liaison officers in each region. The Commissioner's Representatives are responsible for planning and directing all liaison, public relations and information activities in the region with the view to increasing understanding and support for Canada's linguistic duality. Their work includes presentations and participation in discussion groups about the fundamental value of our two official languages, the official languages communities and French language education in general.

The Commissioner's office produces several bilingual posters, which are available free of charge. " Feathered Friends" gives the English and French names of a variety of North American birds; "Owls Hoot" shows birds and animals and describes the sound each makes, and "Canada Goose" shows young Canadians up to 9 years of age that federal government services are available on both official languages. The TRADITION, VISION and PERSPECTIVE series features regional scenes by famous Canadian artists and encourages reflection with inspiring bilingual messages. The Commissioner's office also produces videos, CDs and resource kits, which can be used in the classroom.



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The Commissioner produces an annual report and several studies which are available on their Web site <www.ocol-clo.gc.ca>. Some of the more recent special studies include:

- Official Language Requirements and Government On-line
- A Senior Public Service that Reflects Canada's Linguistic Duality
- Official Languages on the Internet
- French on the Internet: Key to the Canadian Identity and the Knowledge Economy
- Immigration and the Vitality of Canada's Official Language Communities: Policy, Demography and Identity
- The Governance of Canada's Official Language Minorities: A Preliminary Study
- Rights, Schools and Communities in Minority Contexts: 1986-2002

For further information

Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages
Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Yukon Region
Room 620, 10055 – 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2Y2
Phone: (780) 495–3111, 1–800–661–3642
Fax: (780) 495–4094
Web site: <www.ocol-col.gc.ca>

## *L'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA)*

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### Organizational Structure and Membership

The *Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA)* is an organization that represents about 55,000 Albertans of French background. Its membership includes Albertans of French background and other French-speaking Albertans who support the goals of the association. The *ACFA* has its main office in Edmonton and has regional offices in Fort McMurray, Falher, Grande Prairie, Bonnyville, Plamondon, St. Paul, Legal, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, and Lethbridge.

### Goals

- to be the spokesgroup for the Franco-Albertan community
- to promote the intellectual, cultural and social well-being of Francophones in Alberta
- to promote, facilitate and develop instruction in the French language
- to lobby for and support all aspects of the development of the francophone community
- to establish and maintain communication and contact with Francophones in general
- to maintain positive relationships with persons of various ethnic backgrounds and with Anglophones in the Province

### The *ACFA* and the School Administrator

The *ACFA* can offer your school a connection to the francophone community to:

- gain a wealth of information about the Franco-Albertan community
- access French speakers and entertainers and learn more about potential field trips and activities in French, and
- find French materials and directories that may be suitable as classroom resources.

For further information
or to contact the nearest *ACFA* regional office:

*Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA)*
*Secrétariat Provincial*
#303, 8627 – 91 Street
Edmonton, AB T6C 3N1
Phone: (780) 466–1680
Fax: (780) 465–6773
E-mail: <acfa@francalta.ab.ca>
Web site: <www.francalta.ab.ca/acfa>

## *Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (FPFA)*

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### Background

The *Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (FPFA)* was founded in 1986. It is a provincial, non-profit organization, which works to:

- support the central role of parents in French first language education,
- encourage francophone parents to participate in governing French first language preschool programs and educational institutions, and
- ensure quality and equity in French first language education.

The *FPFA* is a member of the *Commission nationale des parents francophones (CNPF)*, an organization which unites and supports provincial francophone parent organizations throughout Canada.

### Mission

The *FPFA* encourages and promotes parents' dynamic participation in their children's education at home, in their educational institutions and in Alberta's francophone communities.

### Organizational Structure and Membership

The *FPFA* is governed by a volunteer board of directors and has a small staff and head office in Edmonton.



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Member associations include school councils of French first language schools throughout Alberta, francophone preschool parent committees, and regional parent bodies involved in francophone education in Alberta.

### The *FPFA* and the School Administrator

While the *FPFA*'s main focus is on French first language education, it also has an interest in the promotion of French as a second language. It is available as a resource to parents and educators wishing information on the different French programs offered in Alberta and their intended clientele.

For further information

*Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta*
Suite 203, 8827 – 91 Street
Edmonton, AB T6C 3N1
Phone: (780) 468–6934
Fax: (780) 469–4799
E-mail: <fpfa@francalta.ab.ca>
Web site: <www.francalta.ab.ca/fpfa>

## Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*)

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### Background

The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT) was established in 1977 to promote and improve French immersion programs in Canada. Since its creation, CAIT has initiated numerous activities with the aim of enhancing immersion teaching:

- biennial national conferences for teachers and administrators, held mid-fall
- alternate year thematic colloquiums for teachers and administrators, held mid-fall
- *Journal de l'Immersion Journal* published quarterly
- annual National Summer Institutes for immersion teachers
- professional development videos such as *De ses propres ailes*
- Certificate of Excellence awards
- creation of a consortium of Canadian universities offering French immersion teacher training programs, which meets regularly to assist CAIT in initiating and carrying out a variety of projects
- promotion of dialogue and partnerships with both national and provincial associations working in the area of French second language learning and provincial departments of education, as well as with federal initiatives

### Mission

The Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers is a professional, non-profit association, which supports immersion teachers through reflection,

research, dialogue and intervention. CAIT also strives to promote immersion and to contribute to the development of immersion pedagogy in Canada by:

- promoting second language teaching in an immersion setting
- representing the interests of immersion programs to interested stakeholders
- providing a forum for the exchange of ideas on immersion programs and teaching methods
- identifying and developing teaching strategies to further the acquisition of a second language and to promote students' learning in all subjects taught in the second language
- initiating studies and research projects
- disseminating studies and research findings in the field of immersion
- providing a forum for discussion related to the implementation and administration of immersion programs
- encouraging teachers to heighten students' awareness of other cultures, especially the cultures of French-speaking countries

### Organizational Structure and Membership

CAIT is governed by a volunteer board of directors. Through individual membership in CAIT, administrators and teachers receive the *Journal de l'Immersion Journal* containing informative articles and references to research.

### CAIT and the School Administrator

CAIT is an important source of professional development and resources for French immersion teachers.

- Encourage teachers to become members of CAIT.

- Review CAIT's calendar of conferences, colloquiums and the National Summer Institute when planning professional development activities and encourage teachers to take full advantage of the many opportunities and resources CAIT has to offer, including a guide to French immersion, especially for teachers and administrators new to French immersion, and an updated repertory of French second language teaching resources (in collaboration with the *Commission de l'Amérique du Nord*).

For further information

CAIT/*ACPI*
201, 57 Auriga Drive
Nepean, ON K2E 8B2
Phone: (613) 998–0051
Fax: (613) 998–7094
E-mail: <acpi@umontreal.ca>
Web site: <acpi.scedu.umontreal.ca>



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## Conseil français (CF)

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### Background

The *Conseil français* is a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. It works in partnership with the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT) when CAIT conferences are held in Alberta.

### Mission

The *Conseil français* supports the professional growth, both pedagogical and linguistic, of teachers in French first language and French immersion settings throughout Alberta.

### Organizational Structure and Membership

The *Conseil français* is governed by a provincial executive. Teachers become members through payment of a small membership fee and are then eligible to receive publications (such as the member newsletter *Chuchoteries)* and to attend an annual professional development conference.

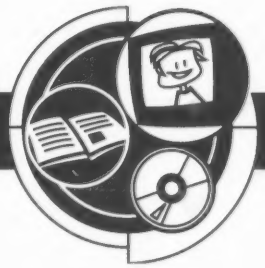
### The *Conseil français* and the School Administrator

- Encourage your teachers to become members of *CF*.
- When planning professional development activities, encourage teachers to participate in *CF*'s offerings.

For further information

*Conseil Français*
c/o The Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 – 142 Street
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1
Phone: (780) 447–9400, 1–800–232–7208
Fax: (780) 455–6481
E-mail: <marnal@teachers.ab.ca>
Web site: <www.teachers.ab.ca/councils>

# 12 Textual and Multi-media Resources



## The Learning Resources Centre (LRC)

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The Learning Resources Centre, a branch of Alberta Learning, distributes the learning and teaching resources required to support Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum. The LRC also offers alternative-format resources and specialized equipment for loan to students with visual impairments, as well as audio-format resources on a cost recovery basis for students with various print disabilities.

The LRC carries close to 3,000 approved French resources that support the teaching and administering of Alberta's French immersion program. This includes approximately 800 Student Basic resources, 500 Student Support resources, more than 1,000 authorized Teaching resources, 250 resources developed by Alberta Learning, as well numerous ancillary resources that the LRC carries by request of the French teaching community. The complete listing of French resources available at the LRC can be found at <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca/rc/ResourcesCatalogue.pdf > (see Appendix H for a CD-ROM version).

Orders can be placed with the LRC using the 24-hour, secure on-line ordering service <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca>, by phoning (780) 427-5775 (Toll Free 310-0000), by faxing your order to (780) 422-9750, or by visiting the LRC in Edmonton at 12360 – 142 Street. The LRC offers free delivery within Alberta. French-speaking staff are available.

Eligible Alberta schools can save 25 percent on purchases through the Learning Resources Credit Allocation (LRCA). Other programs, such as the Aggregate Ordering Discount (AOD) Program that promotes early ordering practices across Alberta, are available to all customers of the LRC.



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## LearnAlberta.ca

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LearnAlberta.ca supports lifelong learning in Alberta by providing access to high-quality digital resources designed for teachers, parents and students. The Web site offers learner-centred, multimedia resources; interactive concept lessons; reference tools and more. Alberta Learning is working with stakeholders to develop, source and adapt materials to relate directly to the Alberta Programs of Study. The current Web site, <www.learnalberta.ca>, provides project information and exemplars of resources—accessible to Alberta learners from computers in schools, homes, public libraries and any location connected to the Internet.

The LearnAlberta.ca Web site offers resources to enhance French language studies. Some projects have been initiated in French and others involve the translation and adaptation of resources developed in English. New resources are continuously being added for mathematics, science, Career & Technology Studies (CTS) and more; visit the "Resources" section of the Web site, <www.learnalberta.ca/CTSEnglish_French/CTSFrenchIndex.asp>, to find French materials like Career & Technology Studies: Multimedia Segments/ *Études professionelles et technologiques (ÉPT): Segments multimédias*. The Online Reference Centre features the Canadian Encyclopedia: a fully bilingual multimedia reference resource.

In the future, the LearnAlberta.ca Web site will evolve into an e-learning portal covering all curriculum areas and grade levels. In addition to expanding the range of French resources available, the portal will offer a French interface mirroring the English version. Teachers and students will be able to search using French terminology, find French resources and benefit from learning in a completely French on-line environment.

## Reading Materials and Research to Support Continued Professional Development

c

There is a wealth of books, articles, periodicals, and newsletters to support the continued professional development of administrators, teachers and other stakeholders involved in French immersion programs.

- Periodicals are a good source of information on research and pedagogy. For a partial list of periodicals, see Chapter 5, page 71. Membership in the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*) includes a subscription to *Journal de l'immersion Journal* and membership in Canadian Parents for French includes provincial and national newsletters (see Chapter 11, pages 141–142 and 146–147).

- Canadian Parents for French is an excellent source for information and research. See Chapter 11, page 142 for contact information, or go to <www.cpf.ca> for information on how to access their searchable database.

- A growing number of Web sites offer research articles, searchable databases, and access to classroom resources for French immersion or second language learning. For an initial list of Web sites, see Chapter 5, page 69.

- *Yes, You Can Help!* (Appendix A) includes a list of Web sites, periodicals, books, pamphlets, and articles, beginning on page 137.

- As referenced throughout this handbook, the reports from the *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future* conference series provide another excellent source of information for administrators of French immersion programs. Copies can be ordered at <www.cpfalta.ab.ca/btforder.htm>.

- See also the reference lists at the end of each chapter in this handbook.



Handbook for French Immersion Administrators
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# Appendix A

- Mandin, L. **"French Immersion: How It Works."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.
  Reprinted with permission.

- Halsall, Nancy D. **"French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research."** Keynote Address in *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.
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- Alberta Education. ***Language Learning in French Immersion Classrooms in the Transition Year: Information for School Administrators.*** (Available in 2003)

- Halsall, Nancy D. **"Poverty and French Immersion Mix."** *Journal de l'immersion Journal* 23, *2* (July 2001).
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- Lapkin, S. **"Uses and Misuses of Research in School Board Decision-Making: Examples from French Immersion."** *Contact* 10, *3* (October 1991).
  Reprinted with permission.

- ***What do I want for my child?/Qu'est-ce que je veux pour mon enfant?***
  Edmonton: [n.d.], 2000.

- ***Yes, You Can Help! Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents.*** Revised Edition.
  Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2002.

BACKGROUNDER

# French Immersion: How It Works

> "No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills, and the academic achievement of French immersion students, have been well documented and research shows the program works." **(Canadian Education Association, 1992, p2)**

Since its inception 35 years ago, the program has evolved but the distinct feature of immersion remains—teaching curriculum via a second language. French immersion is a highly successful approach to second language learning—an effective way for students to become functionally fluent in a second language while achieving all of the objectives of a regular program.

How well does it work? One only has to think about the numerous students in Alberta who successfully write diploma exams in French in Social Studies 30, Biology 30 and Math 30. Not only do they learn a second language but they also develop their ability to think, to reflect, to analyze and to apply knowledge. They develop what we call second language proficiency, which enables them to master concepts as simple as colours and the family, and as complex as the causes of the world wars and trigonometry. Indeed, learning another language in an immersion setting is not limited to the language per se, its vocabulary or its grammatical rules. It is learning the skills of communicating, according to social and cultural context. It is adapting communicative strategies to get the message across, or cracking the right joke without making a cultural or linguistic *faux pas*. Many adults who have learned French as a second language know how difficult and frustrating it can be to express themselves in French. It is not the case for French immersion students. They don't have to blush, get nervous or think twice to express their thoughts. French speakers do not switch to English when they speak to French immersion students. They perceive immersion students as being able to carry on a normal conversation in French, so they just continue to speak French.

## How Do Students Achieve This Level Of Functional Bilingualism?

### *Second language acquisition vs. first language acquisition*

For the child, learning French the immersion way will be much the same as learning in his first language. In a typical French immersion classroom, the 'gentle approach' is used. The teacher uses French all of the time, speaking in English only if a student's health or safety is at risk. Gestures, mime, pictures and objects are used to help the children understand. Very quickly, through watching and listening, the students begin to recognize words and phrases, responding appropriately.

Immersion students learn to be good listeners. From the beginning, they have to pay very close attention to the teacher, in order to understand what is happening in the classroom. They must attend not only to words but also to gestures, body movements, intonation and expression. In addition to these clues, they pick up on the similarities between certain English and French words (e.g. "banana" and "banane").

Children also become very sensitive to the teacher's response to what they do and say. The teacher listens and observes carefully to verify what information the students possess and understand. On this basis, she consciously adapts her speech and classroom activities to assist the children. The early years of schooling have to be more structured until a functional level of fluency is reached. As language develops, the potential of meaning-making develops, resulting in second language proficiency, that is, using language for real purposes. Students are able to use the target language in various social-communicative situations as well as in academic-intellectual situations. Once the students develop a certain level of second language proficiency, they are able to engage in divergent or evaluative thinking processes which will lead to the creation of new thought schemata by means of the target language. As children acquire more meanings in the second language, they become better able to use the second language for cognitively demanding tasks. It takes years of immersion schooling to reach such a level of comfort in communication. The more exposure students have to French and the more they use it, the better their communication skills and the greater their confidence in their ability to use the language.

Immersion students gain control over two language systems and they are accustomed to learning the nuances of another language in order to be understood by their teacher and in their mother tongue by their parents and neighbours. Immersion works so well because the students are not just studying the language—they are using it in meaningful ways.

### *Positive transfers*

Clearly, the research shows us that students' knowledge of English is not in jeopardy in French immersion programs. Many children are reading before they start school; some begin on their own to read in English once they have acquired this skill in their second language. It seems clear that once literacy skills are well established in one language, they transfer readily and rapidly to the other language.

Both French and English are read from left to right, both use groups of letters to form words and groups of words to form sentences, and both use the same alphabet. All of this makes it relatively easy for children to transfer the skills of reading from French to English or from English to French. However, because the children in Alberta are constantly exposed to English in the home and in the community, their knowledge of English is not threatened. We should therefore take this opportunity to immerse the young students in the target language so as to ensure that their level of language is sufficiently functional to enhance their ability to understand what they read as they learn the mechanics and the strategies of reading.

### *Level of stress for immersion students*

Children in immersion programs accept French as a normal part of their schooling. Obviously, the younger the child, the easier it appears for them. Healy (1990) in his book *Endangered Minds*, tells us "the brain is ravenous for language stimulation in early childhood but becomes increasingly resistant to change when puberty arrives" (p. 86). Since language shapes our thinking, and sharpens our ability to reason, to reflect and to respond to the world, it is important that we focus on this moment to introduce young children to a second language. We all know bilingual or trilingual children who are able to communicate to different audiences in their language of choice. Penfield tells us children can learn up to five languages simultaneously, providing the audience is relatively stable. We know that young children who are exposed to a second language quickly develop fluency with a native accent. This is seen, for example, among children living in a foreign country who have a nanny or whose parents use two different languages in the home.

As for the notion that children will find it difficult to begin school in a second language, researchers (Weber & Tardif, 1990), comparing reactions of children beginning immersion and English kindergartens, reveal to us that the issue is not the language but simply adapting to the new social setting with children they do not yet know.

> The fact that not understanding the teachers seemed only a minor nuisance to the children could indicate that children are more tolerant of ambiguity than are adults. Even in their first language, young children are accustomed to not understanding everything adults say. In addition, they do not feel as socially awkward about not understanding as adults might in a similar situation, nor are they as reluctant to ask for help. Not knowing everything, relying on adults and asking lots of questions are part of the socially accepted role of being a child...At the beginning of the year, the immersion kindergarten children often told us that they didn't understand French but were adamant in telling us they understood the teacher, who spoke almost exclusively in French.(p.57)

Older children and adults have far more difficulty learning another language and developing an authentic accent.

### *The classroom context*

Successful teachers in French immersion programs are mindful of three factors: how children learn, how children learn languages, and their own ability to serve as good linguistic models. These teachers are aware that learning a language is a long, complex and continuous process. It is a labour of love and patience. Because we believe the process is as important as the product, their pedagogy must reflect and value both. Furthermore, the teachers must not lose sight of the double mandate of French immersion programs: teaching the curriculum and teaching a second language.

The problem may not be one of learning in a second language or in one's native language but one of pedagogy. In order to learn, children's minds must be stimulated by learning situations which will enable them to function at all thinking levels in the language of instruction of the classroom. Every pedagogical action influences the development of children.

Ideally, the French immersion teachers should consider the pedagogical implications identified among the distinguishing characteristics of immersion practices. Among the practices which deserve attention in immersion classes, we find:

- the ability to simplify teacher talk to a level that makes it possible for the learners to process the information,
- the ability to assist children in expressing the acquired information in their own words,
- the ability to create activities inviting students to produce comprehensible output at the appropriate age level, not only for pedagogic functions but also for organizational and social function.

## The Roles of Decision-Makers

As decision-makers in French immersion programs, a number of issues surface at this time. To keep the programs healthy and viable, we must, together, reflect on fundamental questions such as:

- why does it make sense for children to be exposed to a second language from kindergarten?
- depending on grade level, what are the points at which there is too little exposure to or use of French to make an immersion program work—that is, the students' French skills are not adequate for the acquisition of concepts and skills in math, science and social studies?
- as an English speaking unilingual administrator of a school/district offering an immersion program, what do I need to know to supervise and evaluate instruction?
- as a supervisor or evaluator of programs, what are indicators of appropriate and effective teaching strategies?
- as an administrator, which qualities are important in a French immersion teacher?
- what are the differences between a good immersion teacher and an excellent immersion teacher?

## Conclusion

Teaching in a French immersion context demands support and dialogue. Educators teaching in French immersion programs need to reflect on their beliefs regarding learning, language acquisition and ideal pedagogical practices in such a context. They need time to reflect as well as strong leaders who will accompany them as they probe their pedagogical practices. Who asks the questions? Are we asking the right questions? The parents—what is their role in this endeavour?

In order to continue to ensure success in our immersion programs, we must continue to reflect on what is happening in French immersion classrooms. A stronger partnership between teachers, administrators and researchers would enhance the possibilities of assisting all educators involved in this initiative to further improve our pedagogical practices in French immersion schools. A reflection *on* and *in action* clearly helps raise the level of consciousness of teachers as they attempt to meet the challenging but rewarding task of teaching children in a second language. Teaching should not be a solitary activity. As educators, we must question even what seems so obvious!

Dr. Lucille Mandin, Associate Professor, Faculté Saint-Jean, Edmonton, Alberta

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Alberta Education, 1997. *Yes, You Can Help: Information and Inspiration for Immersion Parents*, Edmonton: Alberta Education.

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SESSION NOTES

# French Immersion: How It Works

**Lucille Mandin**

The following summary was prepared from notes taken during the session by a volunteer recorder, and from any other written records of the session as may have been kept on flip charts or work sheets. The summary was reviewed by the session presenter and printed with his agreement.

## Opening concerns raised by delegates

*French immersion programs are challenged by attrition. Why?*

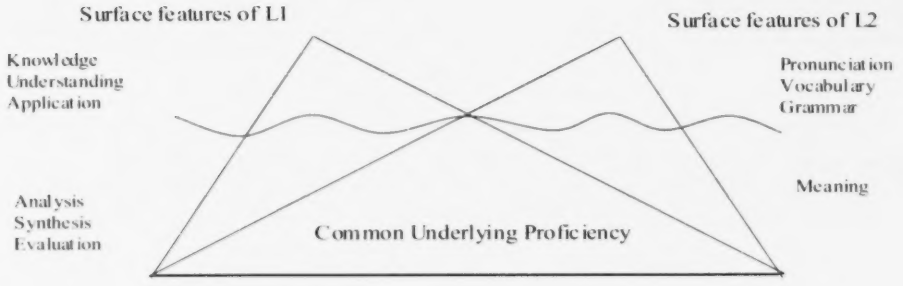
We've stopped promoting the program, riding on past success stories. We have taken for granted that the momentum is strong enough to ensure continuity.

We may have forgotten why it works, and why and when it works so well. There is therefore a need to promote the program more positively through such means as providing research results to parents.

*French immersion programs need to be improved/enhanced.*

Because we have forgotten the fundamental principals of immersion pedagogy, the program is often watered down. Whether consciously or unconsciously, there is a perception that the program is too difficult for the students and therefore English is often overused in classrooms, particularly in the early years. It is not uncommon to hear English spoken in Kindergarten in March. This is also evident throughout the program, but particularly at the high school level. As we get closer to university, French is used more and more sparsely; therefore the end results are flawed.

The dual iceberg Representation of Bilingual Proficiency




Cummins, Jim *Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy*. London, UK: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 1984.

Modified by Mandin, 1985

We need to work on increasing comprehensible language input for our students and providing multiple opportunities for student output in authentic contexts. We must focus on the importance of interaction in French in our classes—teacher-student and student-student interactions. Attention must also be given to error correction to avoid error fossilization.

We need to reflect on pedagogical practices, that is, on what happens in the classroom. Too much emphasis is placed on results and not enough on how we get these results.

[Dr. Mandin's presentation followed.]

## Issues

### *How does French immersion work?*

In a typical French immersion classroom, the "gentle approach" is used. The teacher uses French all of the time, offering the children a rich, varied linguistic environment similar to the one in which he learned his first language.

What is the difference between acquiring and learning a language? Language acquisition refers to the natural approach. It focuses on the need to communicate and to get things done in the language. The exploration of meaning is done in the context of interaction with significant others. On the other hand, learning a language focuses on forms to be mastered. Learners are very conscious that they are studying a language. In the immersion setting, students are introduced to the second language via the natural approach; however, conscious learning is also part of the process.

### *What does learning a second language do for children?*

It not only helps them learn a language; it helps them learn how to learn.

Children become very good listeners and sharp communicators. They learn to attend to gestures and contexts, not just to words. They become very sensitive to the teacher's response (tone, intonation, body language), and to the context of communication.

Children learn to get control over two languages. They are able to transfer skills from one language to the other effortlessly. Language awareness is sharpened.

Children develop a sense of pride if they are supported in their endeavor of learning a second language. This pride creates a sense of belonging (particularly important fir children with learning disabilities who often suffer as a result of transferring out of the program.)

### *How do children make meaning when learning a second language?*

Cummins' model of the "dual iceberg" of bilingual proficiency was presented. (See figure below.) This schema demonstrates the fact that children are not empty headed when they register in the French immersion program at Kindergarten. They have knowledge/comprehension of their first language on many levels (semantic, syntax, grammar, phonics). This knowledge is learned through modeling and through significant communication in authentic contexts.

Children also have a basic understanding of the world, referred to as a common underlying proficiency in Cummins' diagram. They have knowledge and an ability to comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate the world in which they live. They are also creative, divergent and critical thinkers, albeit at their level of development.

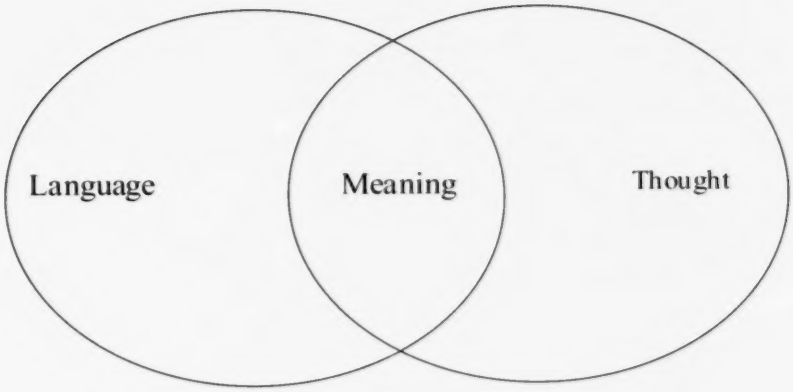
In a French immersion program, teachers must be mindful of the outstanding triangle in the iceberg model—the triangle of surface features of the second language which involves visible features such as spelling, pronunciation and grammar—on which there is too much emphasis in the early years. Teachers need to emphasize the deep semantic and functional meaning, which is equally important in learning a second language as in learning a first. Today we have become so content-focused (result-based) that we neglect some of the cognitive abilities or skills required in developing deeper thinking skills.

Immersion pedagogy must involve "connected" knowing in which the language is being developed while there is learning in subject areas. We therefore need strong language models who can adjust the linguistic input to the learner's level of development (N+1, Krashen) and have the ability to inspire students to articulate knowledge in their own words.

In the communicative approach, language and thought are developed simultaneously. (See figure below) Thought and language are two intersecting circles with the overlap constituting "meaning making". This is possible with authentic learning experiences where kids are kept connected to what they know and are continually constructing meaning. If we keep the two circles connected all the time, we will be mindful of the questions we generate, since it is these questions which will allow us to get at the deeper levels of meaning.

### *Characteristics of a desirable environment for second language learning*

## A Communicative Approach




Kindergarten teachers should speak almost exclusively in French. Teachers must remember that children are capable of making meaning within the context of the classroom. Children may use different strategies to bring meaning to teacher input, many of the same strategies they use to understand their native language. Teachers must be conscious that their non-verbal language is just as important as their verbal code in the early years. Repetition through songs, games and routines are also to be part of the educational practices in early childhood immersion classes.

Children should be corrected with tact.

Teachers should endeavor to create a safe climate in which students are able to take risks. Students learn language by using it in authentic contexts.

The success of the program depends on early emphasis on rich, authentic teacher input and opportunities for student output in significant contexts. Learning a language is a long, complex and continuous process.

### Pedagogical concerns

*Factors contributing to a second language literacy?*

French immersion educators must be mindful of the following factors contributing to second language literacy:

- linguistic variables—oral base (N+1)—building on vocabulary and language structures

- literacy variables—purpose of reading, intention and level of understanding
- knowledge variables—background information, what is significant to children

As presented in the "dual iceberg" model, the linguistic variable draws our attention in French immersion programs. Because, the literacy and knowledge variables are part of the basic understanding children already possess, the good French immersion teacher builds on vocabulary and language structures by making students aware of linguistic transfers such as cognates, consonants and sentence structures. She/he also ensures that students use their own words to make meaning so that reading is truly understanding print, bring meaning to text, not simply decoding. This critical oral component must be linked to the child's experience.

The concern must be with the language that is feeding the learning. Reading must be closely linked with the literacy variable. The delaying threshold is very important to ensuring that children will be ready and will have had sufficient comprehensible input to be able to bring meaning to text. To create a rich linguistic environment to prepare children for reading, these features must be built into the pedagogical practices: simple teacher talk, interaction, referential questions encouraging children to answer in their own words, opportunities to control the development of topics, a climate of confidence, and using a second language not only to teach concepts but also in the organization of the classroom.

### *When is not enough French an issue?*

Concerns were expressed with respect to the early (Grade 1) introduction of English Language Arts. The use of English in the early grades robs the student of optimal exposure to the target language (French) thus sacrificing the precious time needed for critical comprehensible input. We need to remember that students need a rich linguistic environment in which to develop literacy. This is especially important in second language programs. The period of oral development in the second language must be rich and extended. The more students hear and explore deep semantic and functional meaning with the second language, the faster they will learn to read. Once children understand the connection between the oral and the written language, the process of reading will be accelerated. However, texts must be at the appropriate level of development of the second language. In our resource-driven world, it is dangerous to expose students to texts for which they are not ready. If this occurs over a long period, students convince themselves that reading is too difficult, that they are not capable of reading.

## Participants' concerns

Some administrators have no experience with French or with second language learning and, therefore, do not make good decisions regarding the programs, including staffing decisions.

Unfortunately, teachers who are less fluent in French and have lower levels of second language mastery are often assigned to lower grades and this is where the comprehensible input is critical. They are often less able to spontaneously provide the critical (N+1) level of language. It is the adjustment of the code to the audience that enhances immersion program success.

Concern was expressed that administrators sometimes say that if it's an important concept, then it should be taught in English.

Alberta Education's expectations with respect to the Early Literacy Program are counter-productive in French immersion programs. Teachers are being told that the resources must be in English. French immersion teachers are asked to identify students by October and to start working with them by December (with English resources.) This encourages more emphasis on the use of English in the classroom.

The process of teaching children how to read must be revisited. It is important that the reading process not emphasize surface features only. Too much focus on surface features produces students who can decode but cannot bring meaning to text. Students must discover meaning, make strategies as the learn how to read. For example, they should be alerted to the images created in their minds as they read and given strategies as to what to so when they do not know a word.

Teachers are often restricted by the structure of the classroom and the presentation of the Program of Studies, which tend to separate into subject areas and not favor integration.

Programs need to be evaluated to identify features that need to be improved. Research pertaining to French immersion as well as program results should be made available to all stake-holders.

Transportation issues should be addressed.

Special education programs need to be developed.

Continued efforts must be made to develop appropriate resources.

Stakeholders must seek strategies to keep programs vibrant.

*Participant Recommendations:*

- Provide leadership that is convincing about second language acquisition. Ensure that administrators are knowledgeable about French immersion by holding this kind of symposium every two years.
- Raise the profile of French immersion by reinforcing the fact that French immersion programs through the dissemination of research results and visibly celebrating successes. Make it important enough that people want to get involved.
- Promote the idea of Canada's two official languages.
- Have high expectations of immersion teachers.
- Reflect on existing and desirable classroom practices: insist on experiential approaches to teaching and learning, pay more attention to providing comprehensible input, ensure that students use the second language in authentic contexts, emphasize the concept of intrinsic motivation.

- Provide 100% exposure to French in early childhood years of French immersion, delaying the introduction of English Language Arts until Grade 3.

- Empower and inform administrators of the way in which French immersion works and the importance of sufficient exposure to oral second language during the critical years. Administrators can easily observe this feature in French immersion classes.

- Develop and administer a French Language Arts Achievement Test in Grade 2.

    - The emphasis placed on the results of the English Language Arts Achievement Tests in Grade 3 encourages premature introduction of English during the critical period of second language acquisition. There is a need to validate French and to encourage its extensive use in those critical early years. There is a need to counter the effect of the HLAT (Highest Level of Achievement Testing, developed by Edmonton Public) and CTBS (Canadian Test of Basic Skill) English language tests which are administered by many schools.

- Request a modified approach for French immersion with respect to the Early Literacy Project and develop adequate resources.

    - Ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of the importance of teaching reading strategies in French in class in Grade 1 rather than outside class in Grade 2. Teachers should be mentored to be strong advocates of literacy development within their classroom, rather than hiring specialists to work with individual students outside the classroom.

    - Develop adequate resources.

    - Involve Alberta Education in adapting early literacy skills (Reading Recovery) materials.

    - Begin the process of translating materials with a small effort and build on it.

    - Provide teacher training, not just resource development.

- Ensure excellent language models for the classroom by encouraging personal action plans to ensure teachers (both new and practicing teachers) maintain their language competency in French on an on-going basis.

- Engage student teachers and practicing teachers in dialogues about language learning and teaching by including these issues in the syllabus and possibly in the summative evaluation of field experiences. This would ensure that current pedagogical practices are discussed and that student teachers have opportunities to try new approaches, be they related to language development, learning styles or integration of special needs.

# French Immersion: The Success Story Told by Research

Nancy D. Halsall, PhD

Edited for the conference *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future*
November 19 & 20, 1998
Edmonton

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## Introduction

French immersion, it has been said by the Canadian Education Association (1992), is the most researched topic of all educational innovations. Although bilingualism and multilingualism occur in many parts of the world, in Canada, French immersion was initially seen as an experiment. The title of the 1983 booklet *The Trial Balloon That Flew* captures the attitude of experimentation toward French immersion. This idea of experimentation is one reason for the extensive research surrounding French immersion. A second reason is that each generation of parents, administrators, and trustees has sought fresh evidence that French immersion works. By "works," people seem to mean that French immersion will do no irreparable harm to students, that the students will learn French, and that their English language skills will not be different from non-immersion students. A third reason is that, as immersion has expanded, students with all levels of ability have entered programs, and researchers have wanted to check whether immersion is suitable for a wide variety of students.

After three decades, the general concerns about whether French immersion works have been amply answered. Other issues remain for further scrutiny.

## Acquisition of French Language Skills

Immersion programs vary according to the grade level at which they begin and the amount of time devoted to French during the school day. Early French immersion (EFI) typically begins in kindergarten or Grade 1; late French immersion (LFI) usually begins in Grade 6 or 7, and middle French immersion (MFI) usually begins around Grade 4. High school subjects in French are usually offered to students who have been in immersion in prior grades. The amount of time spent in French varies by grade level, by the grade at which students enter the program, and from province to province and school to school. The range runs from 100% to 50% of time being spent in French. These multitudinous arrangements make studying language acquisition in French immersion complicated, but the abundance of evidence is clear.

When the French acquisition of students in various immersion programs has been compared, the finding has been that the students who have had the largest number of hours in French have had the highest achievement. EFI students do better in French than LFI students, and MFI students fall between the students in the other two programs (Day & Shapson, 1989; Edwards, 1989; Harley, 1987; Hart & Lapkin, 1989; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991; Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1992; McVey, Bonyun, Dicks, & Dionne, 1990; Swain & Lapkin, 1986; Wesche, 1996). EFI students have been found to have greater speaking ability, greater listening skills, and more confidence in using their French language skills. More consistent levels of performance have been found among EFI students (Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991).

The French language skills of immersion students are high, but when compared with the skills of students whose first language is French, are below those of Francophones (Genesee, 1978; Holobow, Genesee, Lambert, & Chartrand, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1981). The skills that diverge the most are speaking and writing.

A widespread belief is that by the time students reach high school there is no discernible difference between students who have come through the various programs. On the face of it, there is some evidence to support this belief, particularly regarding the receptive skills of listening and reading (Dicks, 1994). However, a clear look at what transpires in immersion programs is warranted (Edwards, 1989).

It is clear that LFI programs are valuable for those who enrol in them and stay in them, but it is important to determine who enrols, what their capabilities are, and whether they remain in the program. EFI is seen as drawing a more diverse range of students than other programs. It is possible that LFI students who continue to take courses in French immersion are more motivated than their peers. It is possible that better teaching strategies can be used in EFI programs. Finally, it is possible that the presence of LFI students in high school classes slows down the progress of EFI students.

## English Language Skills of French Immersion Students

A great concern for parents and students has been and continues to be whether students jeopardize the quality of their English language skills by taking French immersion (Halsall, 1997). Much investigation of the issue has been carried out and several summaries of findings have been done (Alberta Education, 1992; Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Edwards, 1989; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Parkin, Morrison, & Watkin, 1987).

Researchers have found that there are some lags in English language skills in students in grades 1 to 3. The lags disappear by Grade 4 or 5, independent of the proportion of English instruction time provided from Grade 3 on (Edwards, 1989).

For MFI students no negative findings have been reported related to English language skills. One group of researchers (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1988) found that EFI students did better than MFI students in reading and vocabulary. This finding was interpreted as indicating that immersion education enhances English skills over the long term.

For LFI students, researchers have found no detriment to English skills (Halpern, MacNab, Kirby, & Tuong, 1976; Shapson & Day, 1982). Recent research on English language skills has confirmed the findings in the 1970s and 1980s (Fine, 1992; Gaudet & Pelletier, 1993; McVey, Bonyun, Dicks, & Dionne, 1990)

Immersion has not been found to be detrimental to intellectual development. In fact, recently researchers have found that some skills, such as the figurative and metaphoric use of language, might be enhanced by second language learning (Neufeld, Arnold, Flaborea, Paterson, & St. Lewis, 1992).

## Special Education for Immersion Students

As students with a wider range of ability level than the very first immersion students have entered immersion, particularly EFI, researchers have continued to find favourable

comparisons between the skills of immersion students and their peers in Francophone programs and in English programs (Carleton Board of Education, 1994). Attention has now turned to the issue of whether students with special needs can be served in and benefit from immersion programs. This issue is integrally related to the issue of attrition from immersion programs. Immersion has been found to be suitable for students having academic difficulty and for the learning disabled (Edwards, 1989). Language disability is an impediment to academic achievement, but this has not been found to be more so when students are enrolled in immersion.

Yet the main reasons for the transfer out of immersion continue to be difficulties with academics, language problems, and behavioural problems (Ali Khan, 1993; Kasian, 1993; Stern, 1991; Vedovi, 1992).

Researchers have not concluded that students experiencing difficulties should leave immersion programs, but have encouraged the development of strategies for working with students with special needs within their program (Ali Khan, 1993; Keep, 1993; Wiss, 1989). Interestingly, the call for increased services within immersion has been made by researchers with extensive experience not only in immersion but also in special education (Ali Khan, 1993; Cummins, 1984; Demers, 1994; Halsall, 1994; Keep, 1993; Murtaugh & Dirren, 1992).

The empirical evidence that transferring a student out of immersion leads to success for that student is scant (Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Halsall, 1989, 1994; Kasian, 1993; Lakehead Board of Education, 1990). This practice of removing students from immersion who are referred for assessments cannot be supported on the basis of research. Students who remain in immersion are more likely than students who leave to have parents convinced of the value of immersion and to be devoted to having their children remain in immersion (Demers, 1994; Stern, 1991; Vedovi, 1992).

In Edmonton, the public school district experimented for two years with a self-contained class specifically designed for learning disabled students in French immersion programs. On the basis of the evidence gathered, the program will continue and may expand, according to Rousseau (1998). Although the trend in education is toward integration of students with special needs in regular classrooms along with appropriate programming and support, this experiment in a self-contained setting for French immersion students with learning disabilities will undoubtedly produce information that will be helpful to all immersion teachers.

The matter of the provision of support to special needs students frequently leads to questions regarding the prediction of who will be able to cope and who will do well in French immersion. A very cogent discussion of the issue was provided by Edwards (1989). Briefly, he stated that prediction of success in general, that is, in English, French immersion, or any type of program, while possible for groups of students, is not possible for individuals. Prediction in immersion is not possible, given the current state of knowledge and the measurement instruments available. He cautioned against the overinterpretation of assessment results. Edwards's discussion is based on the work of Cummins (1984), Makin (1984), and Trites (1976, 1977, 1980).

There has been little research on prediction of success in immersion. In one study on stress in the immersion classroom, the researcher found that more students who tested low on coping strategies and resources transferred out of immersion than remained in immersion (Ali Khan, 1993).

Most writing on prediction has focussed on the ways of continuing to serve students in immersion programs rather than removing them.

## Attrition/Retention

At the high school level, the reasons given by students, parents, and teachers for attrition in immersion programs have been summarized as:

- a lack of variety of course choices;
- too heavy a workload caused by the demands of immersion;
- the need to choose between immersion and other programs, such as the International Baccalaureate;
- the belief that higher marks for university entrance would be obtained in English;
- a lack of opportunity to practise speaking French, both in and out of school; and
- a poor quality of teaching and courses.

(Calgary Board of Education, 1991; Halsall, 1994; Husum, 1992).

At the elementary level, the reasons given for transfer from immersion have been summarized as:

- difficulty in understanding, speaking, and reading French;
- difficulty in reading English;
- poor relations with the immersion teacher;
- emotional or behavioural problems; and
- lack of remedial help.

(Halsall, 1994; Parkin, Morrison, & Watkin, 1987).

An Alberta Education study (1992) as well as other research (Bennett, Boss, Carlson, & Soucy, 1982) lends support to the belief that students get higher marks when they take exams in English. By policy, Alberta allows students to take diploma exams in English. This is an issue requiring further study and may well be explored in future, as researchers turn their attention to the pedagogy, or teaching/learning aspects, of French immersion programs.

These recommendations for retention at all grade levels have been made:

- that a model be developed for studying attrition,
- that ongoing teacher training be provided in methodology,
- that teacher selection and recruitment be improved,
- that special education programs be developed within immersion,
- that more extensive awareness programs be undertaken, and

- that the contribution of second language learning to the development of multilingual capabilities be emphasized.

(Halsall, 1994; Regina Board of Education, 1992).

Recommendations directed specifically toward high school have been:

- increasing the amount of speaking in classes,
- supporting other ways of maintaining French (e.g., clubs),
- ensuring sufficient materials are available, and
- finding ways to make immersion available at the high school level to non-academic students.

(Carleton Board of Education, 1992).

Much discussion has taken place regarding the blending of EFI and LFI students in high school courses, that is, placing students with different numbers of hours of French instruction together in the same courses. In the early years of immersion this practice was avoided, and is still avoided where the enrolment for courses is large enough to warrant organizing different courses for EFI and LFI students. No well-designed research has been undertaken to answer the question of what effect blending has on the achievement of students. Some evidence regarding blending was found in one school district (Carleton Board of Education, 1992) where more EFI than LFI students studied French throughout their high school careers. It was thought that the practice of blending might contribute to this difference in attrition between EFI and LFI students.

Informal comments of students have indicated that blending creates difficulties for LFI students (Halsall, 1997). As well, a study in which data were collected on the relative skills of EFI and LFI students just before high school entry found sufficient differences among the EFI and LFI students for the researchers to advise that blending should be avoided (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1992).

## Pedagogy of Immersion

A criticism that has been levelled at immersion is that it is not and cannot be child centred. The basis of such thinking is that second language teaching must be teacher directed and cannot therefore respond to the interests and needs of individual children. Researchers studying the issue have found that immersion, if designed and carried out along child-centred lines, does not have to be teacher directed. French immersion classrooms can be as child centred as English program classrooms if there is a desire to do that (Halsall & Wall, 1992). This is one example of how research is turning its focus on how language is learned.

A recent bibliography has focused on the instructional, or pedagogical, aspects of immersion (Lyster, 1995). The emphasis on the processes used to impart the French language to students is a departure from the prior emphasis on product, that is, the amount of French learned. In other words, the interest in whether immersion works has been supplanted with an interest in how it works. From the interest in process will come an increased understanding of what

classroom practices will best serve immersion students. A review of the topic has been written by Harley (1998).

Investigation into the pedagogy of immersion will require research designs that extend beyond the traditional quantitative studies. Qualitative designs that describe the learning process and case studies of individual students will be used. Qualitative research has burgeoned in the last two decades and has a methodology of its own. When properly used, qualitative research is every bit as legitimate as research based on statistics.

An example of qualitative research has been provided by Weber and Tardif (1991), who studied kindergarten students by observing them in their classroom as they began to learn French. The researchers found that the students memorized words that were significant to them in the kindergarten context. The students did not appear to be going through any sort of grammatical analysis.

Another issue, which is both pedagogical and administrative, is when to begin the teaching of English in immersion programs. Typically, in EFI, the first years in the program are devoted exclusively to instruction in French. But as more has been understood about how a student's first language supports the learning of a second language, some theorists have called for the inclusion of some English instruction from the outset of the immersion experience. This point of view has been most fully articulated by Cummins (1977, 1986, 1992, 1993) in the context of immigrant children learning English. A good deal of the general public in North America believe, to some extent, that formal learning is best begun in the mother tongue. There is no solid accumulation of research to back up this belief. The immersion experience and the experience in other cultures indeed provide evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless, the issue of when to start English instruction remains unresolved.

Preliminary research findings on the introduction of English illustrate the lack of resolution of the issue. Noonan and Colleaux (1994) studied two groups of students in Saskatoon. One group consisted of students who learned to read English in Grade 1 and French in Grade 2. The other group consisted of students who learned to read French in Grade 1 and English in Grade 2. No differences in either French or English were found between the two groups at the end of Grade 3. Fifteen immersion students in the Calgary Separate School Board had reading and writing in both English (60 minutes) and French. In Grade 1, and to a lesser extent Grade 2, they lagged behind other immersion students who had French reading and writing, but who had only 30 minutes of English. The lag was in both English and French. In English they also lagged behind students in an English class who had only English reading (Bonnar & Cummins, 1993). By Grade 3, the 15 immersion students were reported to outperform both other groups of students in both languages. This finding must be interpreted in light of the small number of students studied, possible differences in teachers, and possible socio-economic status differences (Bonnar & Cummins, 1993). Results of standardized testing must also be taken into account because the average scores of French and English have been above the provincial standard for many years, according to Cécile Bonnar (personal communication, January 24, 1995).

Two additional reports have been issued in Alberta jurisdictions. A report for the Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District and the St. Albert Protestant Separate School District stated that immersion students with English in Grade 1 did not read as well as students with only French in Grade 1. This statement was based on the finding that by Grade 3, the students with both English and French were a year behind the students with only French, in both English and French. However, all groups read above grade level. The study was unable to identify the reasons for the difference, which could be attributed to a variety of causes (Cadrin & Sawchuk, 1995). Another report from the Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Division described the results of a three year experiment in which English was introduced in Grade 1. In the judgment of the author, on the basis of teacher-parent questionnaires and test results for students as well as teacher ratings of the students, the performance of the students in French and English was good enough to continue the program (Pinco, 1996).

Thus it is clear that the reports to date do not resolve the issue of when to begin English instruction in French immersion. Large-scale studies in which all the elements that contribute to differences in achievement are controlled would be necessary. It would also be necessary to have groups that do not have English instruction in order to compare the achievement of students in different situations.

The state of knowledge on this issue has been detailed in the report *Introducing English Language Arts in Early French Immersion* (Halsall, 1995). The author of the report concluded it was likely that no one approach would serve all students and that the issue should be reframed as how to meet the needs of individual students within French immersion. Investigating the different learning needs and styles of French immersion students is part of the new directions in research, that of investigating immersion pedagogy.

## Beyond High School

Language learning requires ongoing practice, so as large numbers of students began graduating from high school with French skills, researchers have been interested in the experiences of those students in the world of work and in university.

As part of a larger study (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1989), students in Calgary, after they had been out of school for one year, were sent a questionnaire regarding their use of French since high school. Students reported more recent use of speaking and listening skills than of reading and writing skills. Watching television and casual conversation were the situations in which French was most frequently used. Forty percent were taking a course in French. The reason given for not taking a course in French was that none was available. In the same study, a group of students still in high school said they would be trying to get a job in which they would be able to use French.

In Saskatchewan, seven years' worth of high school graduates who had been in immersion programs were contacted (Husum & Bryce, 1991). Eighty percent or more of the graduates reported that they were glad to have been in immersion, that they planned to enrol their

own children in immersion, and that they had had experience with French since leaving high school. Among the graduates 53% felt that, to some degree, French had helped them get a job.

A survey of immersion graduates attending four universities in eastern Ontario (Wesche, 1992) during their years at university and afterward found high levels of French proficiency. The graduates also reported that they expected to use their French in future and had a strong desire to use and improve their capabilities in French.

The Toronto Board of Education (1993) surveyed immersion graduates and found that 53% had studied French at university and had felt very prepared to do so. They watched television; read books, magazines, and newspapers; and spoke with bilingual and Francophone friends in French. EFI graduates spoke with friends in French more often than LFI graduates. Half the graduates who were employed full time said knowing French had helped them in getting a job, and half reported using French on the job.

A survey (Hart, Lapkin, & Swain, 1990) in the greater Toronto area of 34 employers in the area of sales and customer service found that French skills enabled graduates to win an entry-level job, but that future promotion was not likely to be enhanced by the ability to speak French because managers related more to staff who could speak English than to customers who might only speak French. Employers were skeptical that immersion graduates could actually fill the positions that were available, so mock interviews of graduates with staff in charge of evaluating the French language skills of job applicants were conducted. It was concluded that many immersion graduates could indeed fill the jobs requiring the use of French.

## Motivations and Attitudes

In addition to getting jobs, students and parents also believe that learning French is an enriching experience in and of itself. As recently as last year, the same results were found in a study conducted in Prince Edward Island (Halsall, 1997). The attitudes of immersion students toward French have generally been found to be positive (Edwards, 1989; Wesche, 1992).

At Grade 8, EFI students have been found to have more confidence than LFI students in using French in real-life situations. At Grade 12, EFI students were still found to be more confident than LFI students (Wesche, 1996).

A change in motivation for enrolling in immersion was found in one study (Toronto Board of Education, 1993). The initial reasons for enrolling were given in this order: learning a second language, future jobs, and challenge or enrichment. Later students moved learning a second language (for reasons of bilingualism and biculturalism) to third place.

Positive parental attitudes and beliefs toward immersion have been found to be instrumental in whether students enter immersion and whether they stay in the program (Edwards, 1989; Halsall, 1997; Olson & Burns, 1983; Stern, 1991; Vedovi, 1992).

## Challenges for Immersion Programs

Immersion has been criticized (Bibeau, 1984; Hammerly, 1985; Harley, 1984; Lyster, 1987) because immersion students have difficulty using French in real-life situations and because the students speak a faulty language that is neither correct English nor correct French. Tardif and d'Anglejan (1981) found that the accent of Anglophones hindered communication with Francophones. When reviewing these issues (Edwards, 1989; Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990), writers have concluded that these are not reasons to abandon immersion programs, but to look for precise modifications to immersion curriculum and pedagogy which will overcome the difficulties encountered. Indeed these concerns, along with other issues, have led to the current research interest in specific classroom practices.

An example of the current research that will inform and alter pedagogy is the work of two researchers (Geva & Clifton, 1994) who compared the progress of good and poor readers in the English program with good and poor readers in the immersion program. The researchers found that good readers in the English program and good readers in the immersion program had similar reading profiles. Good readers, regardless of the language in which they read, showed differences from poor readers on all measures of reading skills. The researchers believed that it was important to determine how appropriate instructional intervention could be systematically applied to increase reading skills in immersion students.

An earlier study (Chmilar, Kendall, & Obadia, 1984) found that there were more differences between students with varying abilities within language programs than there were between immersion and English programs. These researchers, too, concluded that the important intervention was to tailor instruction to the individual needs of students.

A reason that some people give for wanting to begin English in Grade 1 is that students could then receive help in English. Other people feel that the provision of help in French would remove the necessity for reading instruction in two languages simultaneously. Despite this discussion, it is clear that immersion students deserve support in the programs they enrol in. This is not just an issue at the elementary school level, for high school students often report that they do not find the support needed to function well in courses offered in French (Carleton Board of Education, 1992; Halsall, 1994, 1997). How to supply a range of services for the individual needs of students within immersion will be the subject of continued experimentation and research.

High school students do not feel that they get to practise speaking French often enough in class (Carleton Board of Education, 1992; Halsall, 1997). An extensive speaking component is necessary at the high school level. Finding ways to help teachers include speaking in high school courses is a challenge for immersion pedagogy.

## Administrative Issues

Historically, it has been thought nearly impossible to determine the costs of programs such as immersion. Reviewing the issue, Edwards (1989) directs interested individuals to

Partlow (1977), Churchill, Orlikow, Greenfield, and Rideout (1979) and Ragsdale (1979) regarding the complexities and futility of costing such programs. However, with the aid of computers, models for costing special education programs have been developed in the United States and Canada. Building on the special education costing models, some work on costing models for French immersion has been done in Canada.

At the behest of trustees, Halsall (Carleton Board of Education, 1994) reviewed the costing of immersion programs by a number of school districts. Among the school districts was Mount Rundle, in Alberta, now part of the Canadian Rockies School District, which in 1992 reported that immersion did not cost more than the regular program and, in fact, improved the overall financial situation. Some districts reported increased costs because of starting immersion programs, higher textbook costs, administrative staff, and transportation. However, most boards found that immersion programs, once established, do not cost more than regular programs. Transportation is the one area where districts reporting no increased costs believed there might be additional costs, but no district reported an actual tallying of additional costs. In fact, it is recognized that immersion programs generate revenue for school districts. After the findings of school districts were reviewed, Halsall drew together experts with diverse backgrounds to brainstorm on the factors influencing the costs of immersion. Ultimately, a preliminary model was proposed as a first step in developing a costing model for immersion (Carleton Board of Education, 1994).

In the early years of immersion, class size in immersion tended to be smaller than regular program class size (Edwards, 1989; MacNab, 1978; Unitt & MacNab, 1977). The perception that class size is smaller in immersion continues today (Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Halsall, 1989, 1997). However, when carefully investigated, the perception does not always appear accurate (Carleton Board of Education, 1994; Halsall, 1997; Sargent, 1994). This is an issue that has not been thoroughly investigated. It is part of the larger issue of the effects on a school system of offering immersion programs.

Ten years ago, in one large school district where more than 50% of kindergarten students enrolled in immersion, the differential effects (Halsall, 1989) of the two programs were investigated. For the regular program, the effects were found to be as follows:

- more multigrade classes,
- streaming at grades 7 and 8,
- the youngest and least experienced teachers assigned to core French,
- possible reduction in staff morale,
- perception of being second best,
- need to accommodate students who had dropped out and students with negative attitudes toward French,
- higher mobility of students, and
- responsibility for a large proportion of exceptional students.

For the immersion program, the effects were found to be difficulty in finding staff, blending of EFI and LFI students in high school courses, vocal parent groups, young teachers at

high school, lack of special education classes, need for programming for gifted students, and a tendency for students to take few courses in French in high school.

Some of the differential impacts on the two programs had eased by 1994. In particular, over the intervening five years, the discrepancy in the number of multigrade classes and in class size lessened. More students were taking courses in French at the high school level (Carleton Board of Education, 1994). Of course, the differential impacts of programs depends on many factors, including the following:

- the size of the school district,
- region of the country,
- linguistic characteristics of the region,
- the availability of staff, and
- whether the region is rural, suburban, or urban.

(Edwards, 1989). The research is clear; offering alternative programs has system repercussions (Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990).

In the 1980s, rapidly expanding immersion programs taxed the supply of available native French speakers qualified as second language specialists and, at the high school level, qualified to teach specific subject matter (McGillivray, 1984; Nagy & Klaiman, 1985; Obadia, 1984). This was particularly so in rural areas. One survey (Obadia, 1984) found that 25% of immersion teachers did not claim to have native French skills. The displacement of regular program teachers created morale problems (Halsall, 1989; Nagy & Klaiman, 1985; Olson & Burns, 1983). As well, principals felt ill prepared to supervise immersion programs (Edwards, 1989).

The appearance of former immersion students on the job market has eased the situation somewhat. The Canadian Education Association (1992) reported that the situation had improved over a ten year period. In some parts of the country, though, there are still difficulties in staffing immersion programs (Asper, 1990; Fine, 1992). The common notion that the French language skills of teachers do not matter with young students has no basis in the research literature. High school students can be quite vocal about the lack of skills of a teacher unable to function with ease (Halsall, 1997). Principals have become more accustomed to supervising immersion programs, and support has been provided to them through workshops and the sharing of expertise through journal articles (Dagenais, 1990; Kirkland, 1993; Lamarre, 1990; Safty, 1992).

Nevertheless, despite seeming progress in staffing immersion programs, training teachers remains a high priority (Calvé, 1988; Genesee, 1987; Parkin, Morrison, & Watkin, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Tardif, 1985). Indeed, teacher education was identified as the highest priority for the 1990s (Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990). A review of the activities of the 1990s will tell us if this priority has been addressed or has fallen by the wayside, because of reduced budgets.

Many writers, parents, and school personnel have felt that gifted students are bound to do well in immersion. Although immersion programs in and of themselves probably do not meet the criteria designed for gifted programs, the need to foster creativity in gifted students might be met,

at least in part, by immersion programs (Edwards, 1989). Exposure to a second language has been found to enhance creativity and divergent thinking (Edwards, McCarrey, & Fu, 1980; Landry, 1970, 1973, 1974; Neufeld, Arnold, Flaborea, Paterson, & St. Lewis, 1992; Worrall, 1970).

In a 1985 survey of the availability of enrichment in French for immersion students, it was found that it was not provided in most jurisdictions (Canadian Parents for French, 1985). Four years later, Collinson (1989) found that, in comparison with regular program students, gifted French immersion students were disadvantaged in terms of enrichment in French. Teachers have indicated a need for training in recognizing gifted students and providing programs for them (Collinson, 1989).

Some people have questioned the appropriateness of immersion for heritage language students, that is, those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English. After reviewing the issue, Edwards (1989) concluded that there was no research to indicate that immersion was not appropriate for heritage language students. In one study in metropolitan Toronto, the researchers found that heritage language students enrolled in a 50% English-50% French program starting at Grade 5 did well in the program. This was particularly so for students who were literate in their heritage language. Students who were not literate in their heritage language and students who had spoken only English prior to Grade 5 did not do as well as literate heritage language students (Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, & Hart, 1989). In another study it was found that learning French strengthened first language skills (Harley, Hart, & Lapkin, 1986). Studies such as these, and others (Chmilar, Kendall, & Obadia, 1984; Geva & Clifton, 1994), have led to an understanding of the importance of the development of strong literacy skills in students (Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990), regardless of the program.

## Implications for Decision-makers

Decision-makers have a difficult task in resolving issues surrounding immersion in their school districts, for each decision must be made in light of the particular circumstances of the local setting. Research provides some definitive findings, some tentative hints, and some unresolved issues.

What the research does show is that French immersion works. Students do learn French, and the more time they spend in French, the better their skills. Students also learn English. In fact immersion might strengthen English skills, though that is not always the perception. Creativity and divergent thinking may be fostered by bilingualism. Thus decision-makers need not fear that instituting and continuing immersion programs in their district will harm students.

Although we know that there may be some students for whom immersion is inappropriate, with the exception of the severely disabled (such as autistic students), we do not yet have ways of identifying students who will not benefit from immersion. Researchers should be encouraged to continue to find the characteristics of students which enable them to succeed in immersion. This information may come from those interested in psycho-educational assessment or from those exploring teaching/learning practices. Or perhaps understanding may come from

farther afield from education—the new brain research that has already contributed to our understanding of the importance of preschool education.

At any rate, since we do not know who will not benefit from immersion and we do know that support for individuals via special education and remedial resources has proven effective, the prudent strategy would seem to be to provide supports within immersion similar to those in regular programs. It is difficult to see why it would be more costly or problematic to provide resources in one program or another. Special education issues are related to attrition issues.

Many of the reasons for attrition have to do with the quality of immersion programs and the way the programs are structured. For example, the practice of blending students with differing numbers of hours of instruction in French has repeatedly been pointed out as a possible cause of attrition. The French language skills of some teachers and their capability in second language teaching have also been targeted as causes of attrition. Knowing the above, decision-makers should support research that leads to better teacher education and should demand and fund ongoing teacher training for immersion teachers, not omitting high school teachers.

Organizing programs at the high school level has proven a challenge in many school districts. Gathering a sufficient number of students to offer a vibrant program must be weighed against the costs of transportation and students' desires to be with their friends. In this situation, decision-makers must consider whether it is best to provide as much instruction as possible in French prior to high school entry; that is, they must consider the role of EFI in balancing the difficulties of providing high school immersion. At the high school level, the richest possible offering of courses and extracurricular activities in French should be made available.

The question of when to start English language arts is an unresolved one. In fact there may not be one answer to the question. Programs that have been functioning well may not need to be altered. The key is ongoing monitoring of the outcomes of immersion programs. An important consideration is how much time can be taken out of French immersion before the program no longer functions the way it was intended to. Immersion means students are immersed in the language. In the end, a better question might be how best to serve the needs of individual students within immersion programs.

We know that practising a language is an ongoing process and that many high school graduates want to study in French. We know that French is helpful in obtaining employment. Decision-makers can support the aspirations of students by encouraging linkages with institutions of higher learning so that they continue the work that has been started by school districts. Although the research is not clear on gifted French immersion students, special care should be taken that the needs of gifted students are met within immersion.

Nor is the research yet clear on how best to serve heritage language students in immersion. The fact that students have a heritage language might mean that they are in a position to benefit from learning additional languages.

These are some examples of the help that research can provide decision-makers.

## Conclusion

This brief review of research findings regarding French immersion illustrates the contribution that research has made over three decades to understanding immersion and the issues surrounding it. Research cannot make the decisions, however. The role of research is to provide information for decision-makers. In the case of immersion, the information tells the story of success.

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*Language Learning in French Immersion Classrooms*
*in the Transition Year: Information for School Administrators*

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# Poverty and French Immersion Mix

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It was bound to happen, though I didn't see it coming. I'd been working back and forth on studies of poverty and studies of immersion. On both topics I probed the needs and aspirations of the students enrolled in the program and tried to understand what would make the school experience better from the point of view of the students.

**Mix of poverty and immersion**

One morning in a low-income area of northern Manitoba I was interviewing a group of articulate, mainly aboriginal, students about what they liked, what they didn't like, and what alterations they'd like to see in their school programs. They didn't like the school's discipline system because of being assigned to a noisy room that left them no time to sit quietly and think. And they didn't like it when the teachers went so fast they couldn't understand. They liked gym and thought there should be more time spent on physical activity. "You should have the gym open before and after school," one student said. They liked science because they learned about the real world, which made life more interesting. They liked computer work because people really used those machines.

Then one of the students looked at two others and said, "What's the name of that school we used to be in? You know, the one where we spoke French." "French immersion?" I offered. As details emerged I learned that the three students, all boys, moved around a lot and at one point all three had wound up together in a French-immersion school. They took the French as just one of the peculiarities of that particular school and enjoyed learning another language. They even used it outside school. That was in contrast to the frequent finding in research that students in immersion programs do not use French outside the school setting. The students enjoyed the fact that the other students hadn't mastered French either and believed that made them "sort of equal". They believed that French was a part of real life in the way that science and computers were. "You know, some people speak French," they told me. "And we could use it if we ever went away and met someone who spoke it."

They didn't continue with French because they moved and the next school didn't have the program. I asked why they didn't go to the immersion program in their school system, and the response was that they didn't think there was one. Then realizing that my question implied there was one, they asked me, "Is there one?" I answered honestly but cautiously because I knew that immersion programs generally did not accept students who hadn't been enrolled in immersion continuously. These students, who had enjoyed learning French, who were determined to make their way in life, and who came from very poor families, had stumbled on an experience that made them enthusiastic and made them feel part of the in-group.

**In with the in-group**

I had encountered those feelings before, in Prince Edward Island, where middle and senior high school students, some from low-income families, had explained their immersion programs to me in writing and in great detail. They had mastered the details of how the program worked, were involved in a real-life experience, were part of the in-group. They knew the words, they spoke the language, and this, they felt to a student, was their ticket to employment. Some would stay on the Island and use their second language in the tourism industry, where 50% of businesses needed bilingual staff. Others would venture forth to other locales, the number of which was enlarged because they spoke French.

Immersion has been called elitist because the children from middle and high socioeconomic stratums are believed to predominate in the program. Burns tagged the issue in the 1980s, and Hart, Lapkin, and Swain have data from Toronto showing a trend for children from higher socioeconomic-status families to predominate in immersion. My observations around Ottawa, where 50% of the students entered immersion, and around Charlottetown lead me to believe that immersion can serve students living in poverty. Students living in poverty should not miss out on the immersion experience,

but to be certain of including them, school districts have to ensure that their policies, practices, and beliefs enable students living in poverty to have access to the immersion experience.

### Policies, practices, and beliefs

One belief that prevents students living in poverty from enrolment in immersion is that these students need all the time that can be had to learn English. Yet we know that learning one language can support learning a second language simultaneously. (See the writing of Cummins.in References)

In some programs, as already mentioned, students who've missed a grade or more are encouraged not to try to go back in immersion. Students living in poverty often move around a lot. Yet what an important lesson might be learned by students living in poverty by being behind and catching up.

Immersion programs are not always located in poor neighbourhoods, where they can be accessed by the students living there. And poor people aren't able to drive their children across town to another school.

Many school districts try not to promote one program over another. But for families living on low incomes who might move often, how are parents to know what services are available for their children if they are not advertized? Another problem area is the encouraging of students away from immersion. The purpose of screening programs is laudable. It is to identify special needs of students so that they can be addressed. However, an unwanted and sometimes unanticipated outcome is that students living in poverty often wind up being segregated from better-off students. There is a large body of research showing that students living in poverty do better in mixed environments and that there is no detriment to the students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Screening tests specifically for judging which students will do well in second-language settings must be viewed with skepticism, for often the criteria relate more to tractability than to actual language learning. Even the assumption that students slow to develop auditory skills will be hindered by being in immersion is just that, an assumption, not an empirically supported finding.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, my studies of poverty and of immersion and my encounters with students have led me to believe that for students living in poverty another language, whether presented in an immersion or daily-lesson setting, could be an opportunity for engagement in real life which they so value and an opportunity to see themselves as successful. In short, poverty and immersion should mix.

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## Conférences à surveiller !

***... 5e congrès de l'ACREF*** à Ottawa Ontario du 18 au 20 octobre 2001
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***... Congrès de l'APPIPC*** à Burnaby en C.-B. du 18 au 20 octobre 2001
– Thème : *L'intégration des matières par la technologie*

***... Congrès de l'ACPI*** à Toronto les 9 et 10 novembre 2001
– Thème : *L'immersion : une vision de l'avenir*

# Uses and Misuses of Research in School Board Decision-Making: Examples from French Immersion*

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## Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that French immersion education came into existence for social, economic and political reasons, and in some sense, school boards have had to put immersion programs in place with or without actively wanting to. The first program was distinctive in its early reliance on extensive research (Lambert and Tucker, 1972) to monitor student progress, document program outcomes and thereby justify its continued existence.

As immersion has grown, research has continued to serve as a resource for decision-makers (and other consumers, such as parents) and as a rationale for administrative decisions. In this paper I illustrate from my own experience both constructive and destructive uses of immersion research with the help of three concrete examples.

The paper concludes with a plea for a rich, interactive dialogue between decision-makers and researchers. We cannot appreciate the complexity of the issues involved in your policy decisions unless educators fill us in on all relevant contextual variables. Thus the challenge to us, the researchers, is to shape research that is responsive to administrators' and teachers' concerns, and further, having identified appropriate research questions, to make all stages of our work accessible to them.

The first case presented here (Case A) is paradoxical in that it provides findings that may be misused for political purposes and can, at the same time, be used constructively to improve program delivery. Since no definitive action has yet been taken, it is not clear whether the research will have contributed in a constructive fashion to an administrative decision.

Case B, the second example, illustrates a clear misuse of a number of immersion studies to rationalize an administrative decision. And Case C exemplifies the potential of a large-scale study to provide valuable insights for program implementation in a board where conditions differ, but useful inferences can be drawn from the available research.

Often research is used as after-the-fact rationalizing of politically motivated decisions. And although responsible researchers cannot be "bought", all of us have come up against situations where our findings and interpretations are cited to bolster opposing points of view. Also, if we are not totally "in the picture" we can sometimes prove insensitive to local conditions and make unsuitable recommendations.

## Case A: the danger of generalizing from one study

In 1990 I was asked to act as a resource person to a subcommittee of trustees and

staff in a board in Northeastern Ontario. In the urban part of the board, immersion had, since its implementation in 1975, been housed in single-track schools, or in what are known as immersion centres. Elsewhere in the board, immersion is found in dual-track schools.

As an author of the only published study of comparative student outcomes in immersion centres and dual-track schools (Lapkin et al., 1981), and as someone familiar with research on immersion, I was asked to respond in an open meeting to committee questions on the issue of the optimal housing of immersion programs. Many of the parents present had a vested interest in maintaining existing immersion centres, and wanted research evidence to support their preference.

The design of the published evaluation carried out a decade ago in the Carleton Board involved testing immersion students at the grade 5 level in immersion centres (6 classes) and dual-track schools (4 classes) in English and French. A survey of staff was also conducted. On two of four French tests (listening and reading comprehension) and on two CTBS subtests (vocabulary and reading comprehension), immersion centre students outperformed students in dual-track schools. There were no other differences in performance.

Questionnaire data indicated that immersion centre students might use more French in out-of-class contexts (e.g. when speaking to teachers other than their homeroom immersion teacher) than students in dual-track schools. There is evidence from questionnaire responses that centre students get more exposure to spoken and written French in the school environment than dual-track counterparts, a fact which may have had an impact on their French listening and reading comprehension scores. Moreover, teachers in centres appeared better satisfied with resources available in their schools, and with their teaching situations overall. (The scope of our study did not include an examination of financial and other resource allocations to the two types of schools. If it is more cost-effective to deliver immersion in centres, this may have had a bearing on reported perceptions that centres had superior resources.)

In interpreting the results we speculated that support for French in the school environment was more pronounced in the centre setting where we found that school corridor displays featured more material in French, assemblies were more likely to be conducted partly in French, administrative and other staff were more likely to be bilingual, and so on. The presence of French outside the classroom walls was palpable, and doubtless had a positive effect on French performance.

To return to the parent meeting mentioned above, those who felt that the existence of their immersion centres might be threatened, were prepared to take this single evaluation as proof positive that centres provide optimal housing for immersion programs. My job was to explain that the results of a study conducted in 1979 (published in 1981) in a large national Capital board, focussing on one grade level only, with no subsequent replication, cannot safely be generalized.

This is not to say that the evaluation did not yield important findings, however. Mainly through the questionnaire data, it identified factors that might be significant in enhancing student achievement in immersion. It suggested that there are various ingredients that can contribute to a recipe for successful implementation, regardless of school organization — encouraging actively the use of French outside the classroom but within the school so that the language is perceived as an authentic means of communication for a social purpose that goes beyond academic learning within the class and pervades the life of the school.

Among the representations made to Board A following the public meeting was a memorandum from schools interested in maintaining current dual-track arrangements and discouraging delivery of immersion programming in centres. They quoted directly from a telephone conversation with a parent in which I reflected that personally, given the choice as a parent, I would prefer (but never expect) to see my own child in a centre, but that she had been for most of her schooling in a dual-track setting that I had found very satisfactory. This kind of personal comment was used by proponents of both sides of the issue, thus conferring on my off-the-cuff parental musings the status of research evidence!

(There is a sobering lesson for researchers here: given the unforeseen power that casual comments can have when the researcher is considered "an authority", what we do in our personal educational choices carries more weight sometimes than what we say about relevant research!)

During the open meeting I was able to point out that although research findings can contribute to decisions about program housing, it is both appropriate and necessary to consider it as one source of evidence along with information about transportation, physical space, staffing and other resources (such as library collections) — all of these having cost implications — as well as information on demographics and social variables such as the perceived value of the community school, and so on.

This first example is meant to illustrate the pressures to generalize and the pitfalls inherent in generalizing from a single study to settings where population demographics and a host of other factors may differ dramatically from the context where the evaluation in question was carried out. Specifically, the pressures to generalize were coming from immersion centre parents who perceived that immersion delivered in a centre setting was superior. The potential pitfall would lie in making the unwarranted generalization that because of a single study, there is a single recipe for success in program delivery. At the same time, there are important lessons to be learned from a carefully designed and executed program evaluation. In the case presented here, it proved valuable for both the board and me to have a public airing of the issue. Where such face-to-face interactions are not possible, the consequences of citing research findings out of context can be quite devastating, as we shall see in the second example.

## Case B: a misuse of research

In Case B, the misuse of research played a major role in the phasing out of an early immersion program and its replacement by a middle immersion program (beginning at grade 4). On the face of it, there might be any number of legitimate reasons for a decision to replace one program alternative by another. The fact of the change is not, in itself, upsetting. What is disturbing, however, is to claim to base such a decision on research results which, intentionally or not, are presented in a distorted way.

The full exploration of this case study would likely require a book-length report, so I will consider here only some examples of a school board administration's use of OISE research in a four-part document prepared several years ago by Board B.

Like any good "impact" study, this one addressed administrative, organizational and educational aspects of immersion, as well as the research base for a decision to phase out early immersion in favour of a middle immersion program as already noted. Given the multiplicity of factors involved, such a decision may be warranted, though it is always difficult to remove an established and well-functioning program.

One infers from the presentation of information in the administrator's report, that its author thought it best to emphasize the research component, to demonstrate that in fact the existing early immersion alternative was not producing expected results, and suffered by comparison to the second available immersion alternative, namely, late immersion. By extension, then, it was argued that middle immersion would produce superior results to the existing early immersion program.

Volume 3 of the Board report implies strongly that there is a solid research base favouring middle elementary starting points for immersion. It refers to a landmark study of FSL implementation in an Ontario board conducted by OISE researchers Nagy and Klaiman (1985). Consider Nagy's reaction when he was asked to comment on a presumed first draft of Board B's report. Nagy is cited, in the report, as recommending that middle immersion replace early immersion in Wellington County and responds as follows:

> You are... wrong in reporting my recommendation! In an interim report, I suggested that a delay in the start of immersion would be one way to solve demographic/financial problems caused by early immersion, and that this possibility should be discussed further. My argument was that the educational price (the difference between early and middle immersion outcomes) was reasonable in terms of the problems such a delay would solve. I never argued that middle immersion was better. My final recommendation, based in part on a financial analysis that may not apply outside of Ontario, was that immersion continue with an early start, and that compensatory staffing be provided to the regular program to make up for loss of students, staff, and program flexibility.

In support of the view that early immersion furnishes no better results than programs that begin later, Board B's report quotes at length from a province-wide evaluation of early and late immersion programs commissioned by the New Brunswick Department of Education from the OISE Modern Language Centre and conducted in 1984 (Lapkin and Swain, 1984). The evaluation involved grades 3, 6 and 9 under the terms of reference of the contract, with both early and late immersion programs to be assessed at grade 9.

In summarizing the results, Lapkin and Swain draw attention to the fact that they are consistent with those of other large-scale evaluations of the two program alternatives:

> The salient advantages of the early immersion program relate to French listening skills and the perceived degree of comfort, confidence and ability in French on the part of the students. Clearly, the late immersion program is also successful, producing students who achieve as well as their early immersion counterparts in most skill areas.

The report prepared by Board B presents this information as follows:

> The researchers (namely Lapkin and Swain), who are acknowledged strong supporters of Early Immersion, cited that Early Immersion students tended to use the language much more comfortably and with more confidence than the Late Immersion students. It was curious that this was reported only at the end of grade 9 when Late Immersion students had been exposed to only three years of the language versus Early Immersion who had been exposed to the language for nine years.

The reader will recall that the contract mandate called for assessment at grade 9. Moreover, other studies cited in Board B's report bear out that the pattern of comparative findings we reported for grade 9 persists at grade 12.

On this point, in their Wellington County study, Nagy and Klaiman speculated that differences in French performance between early and middle immersion groups might narrow or disappear by the end of secondary school. Middle immersion programs are, for the most part, not yet "mature" enough for this to be verified empirically. But we can look at accumulating data on this issue from comparative studies of early and late immersion, which suggest that few differences persist in test scores in any of the four skill areas (e.g. Hart and Lapkin, 1990; Hart, Lapkin and Swain, 1989; Wesche, 1988). The only strong and consistent pattern of differences is found on self-assessment measures where early immersion students report higher levels of competence, confidence and comfort in coping with communicative demands in French listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In the New Brunswick study, comparisons were made with out-of-province data where possible (that is, in immersion evaluations using the same testing instruments) and with francophones in Edmundston. From these comparisons, Board B concludes that "the Early Im-

mersion Program is not producing the kinds of results that were initially anticipated or ... comparable with results being obtained in other areas of the country".

In fact the findings relating to these comparisons do not reasonably lead to that conclusion as shown by the following two examples from the results:

| Comparative Statement | Comment |
|---|---|
| - grade 6 early immersion students scored significantly lower than Edmundston francophones in both listening and reading comprehension (Lapkin and Swain, 1984). | - notice that this comparison involves francophones, and we would not expect equivalent performance by early immersion students in these skills until grade 8 (Swain & Lapkin, 1982). |
| - grade 6 early immersion students in New Brunswick achieve scores in French reading similar to those of Ottawa-Carleton early immersion groups but are somewhat weaker in listening comprehension. In speaking and writing their scores are strikingly similar to Saskatchewan norms (Lapkin and Swain, 1984). | - in one of four skill areas, available comparative data suggest that New Brunswick students may be weaker; in the three other skill areas, levels of performance are similar (notice that the Board B report cited above specifies that their early immersion results were not comparable to those of other Canadian studies). |

In spite of a voluminous correspondence initiated by Nagy, Lapkin and Swain, intended to set the record straight on these and other misuses of our research, the best we achieved was to have our correspondence presented to the full Board and therefore formally placed in the public domain.

Case B serves to illustrate the close match between issues that preoccupy decision-makers concerned with immersion program implementation and issues with a long-term research tradition. Program comparisons continue to be necessary because they are multidimensional and in each case, the context has an impact. Thus, over the years we have tried to draw inferences from early and late immersion comparisons for other immersion program alternatives. And as relevant data accumulate, our inferences grow firmer. Thus, although the final word is not in on early and middle comparisons, insights from large-scale evaluations (such as the one presented below in Case C) may help administrators faced with a decision on how best to organize the delivery of two immersion alternatives at the senior elementary or junior high level.

## Case C: constructive inferences from a large-scale evaluation

In 1987 we conducted a large-scale evaluation of early and middle immersion programs in the Metropolitan Toronto area. The scope of the evaluation included an examination of the social characteristics of the program populations (Hart, Lapkin and Swain, 1988), but the focus here is on French language outcomes and implications for decision-making. From an administrative point of view, middle immersion is often easier to implement since there are fewer demographic disruptions, and less displacement of regular teaching staff (Nagy and Klaiman, 1985). It is therefore important to determine if there are educational consequences that might influence a board's choice of program. This is particularly relevant for boards implementing immersion for the first time, and choosing among early, middle and late alternatives.

The central research question considered in the "Metro" evaluation is: Are early immersion students more proficient in French than middle immersion students at the end of elementary school (grade 8)? If so, in what ways? What inferences can decision-makers draw from the pattern of results?

The Metropolitan Separate School Board (MSSB) houses a vigourous "middle immersion" or bilingual program beginning at the grade 5 level with fifty percent of instructional time provided in French throughout. This yields a total of just over 2000 instructional hours by the end of grade 8 (though other middle immersion designs allow for accumulating over 3000 hours by the end of grade 8). The early total immersion program discussed here operates in three Metro-area public boards beginning in Kindergarten. Accumulated instructional time in French totals from 5300 to 6040 hours by the end of grade 8, with English language arts being introduced either at grade 3 or grade 4, and approximately fifty percent of instruction in French from grades 5 to 8.

The evaluation involved ten early immersion classes in three public boards and 16 middle immersion classes from the Separate board. We also had access to two classes at a francophone school in Montreal where most students were bilingual, and two classes of unilingual francophones in a Quebec city suburb.

French tests were developed for receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) skill areas. Particular attention was to be paid to listening and speaking skills, areas where prior research (including early and late immersion comparisons) had most consistently found program differences (e.g. Lapkin, 1986; Swain and Lapkin, 1986). In addition, we sought to make the set of tests as communicative as possible while using formats which would allow specification of psychometric characteristics. This involved using real-life materials and providing thematic links between tasks where possible. Finally, the tests had to allow for an initially unknown range of student skill levels, both between and within programs.

Full descriptions of the instruments listed in Figure 1 and the methodology of the evaluation are readily available (Hart, Lapkin and Swain, 1990). For the purposes of this paper a brief summary of the results will suffice.

Overall, early immersion students outperform middle immersion students in varying degrees in all four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing). An important exception to this pattern is the ability to state and support an opinion, where because skills are easily transferred

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from English to French, early and middle immersion students performed equally well. Middle immersion students perform least well in comparison to early immersion on measures of speaking ability. A second type of comparison involved measuring immersion performance in relation to that of francophone peers. In listening and reading comprehension, early immersion performance is closer to francophone standards than middle immersion. In fact, the gap is larger between middle and early immersion than between early immersion and francophones.

Now let us consider program differences in terms of average class scores rather than individual student scores. This has the advantage of revealing the impact of differential class effects. Figures 2 through 7 present visually the range of class average scores by program for selected measures. There is a consistent pattern in the results. In general, the strongest middle immersion class achieves a mean that differs little from that of the strongest early immersion class; in fact in the case of reading comprehension the mean of the strongest middle immersion class exceeds that of the strongest early immersion class (Figure 6). In general, the range of class means for middle immersion is broader than for early immersion.

The information presented in Figures 2 through 7 illustrates graphically an important difference in the pattern of performance among classes in the middle and early immersion programs. Early immersion classes generally produce a "tighter" level of performance, with class averages spanning a relatively restricted range. Middle immersion classes tend to scatter over a broad range of scores, representing a less consistent level of performance.

From these findings, we may conclude that the differences at grade 8 in the linguistic outcomes of early and middle immersion programs are substantial and important. Assuming a desire for homogeneity in second language proficiency levels, we expressed the view in the concluding section of our report that overall, early and middle immersion students could not, for example, reasonably be placed together in blended classrooms at grade 9. This does not mean that the best middle immersion students could not cope with early immersion standards.

Since program design varies widely across Canada, how can such research results feed into decision-making in a meaningful way? Let us consider Case C, that of a board facing a decision about how best to accommodate two immersion alternatives at the senior elementary level. This year one class of early immersion students entered grade 7. Most non-immersion students in the board have been enrolled in an extended-core program from grade 4, intended to enable them to "step up" to late immersion at grade 7 if they wish to do so. Thus they have had 20-minute daily FSL in grades 1 to 3, 40 minutes in grade 4, 60 minutes in grade 5 and 80 minutes in grade 6, yielding a total of 720 accumulated instructional hours in French.

The question I was asked to address last spring at a meeting of principals and supervisory personnel concerned the possibility of blending early immersion and extended-core students opting for late immersion at the grade 7 level. As mentioned above, in the Metro study, we concluded that blending for early immersion students with between 5000 and 6000 instructional hours in French, and middle students with just over 2000 hours would be inappropriate at the grade 9 level.

In Board C, blending would involve early immersion with about 1000 fewer hours than the Metro instance, with "step-up" students having accumulated only 720 instructional hours. The inference is clear: it would simply not be advisable to blend at this level, unless one explicitly were willing to accept classes with much more heterogeneous second language proficiency levels than is typical of early immersion programs. If blending occurred, early immersion parents might well object, while "step-up" or late immersion parents might welcome the infusion of small groups of early immersion students into classes where peer teaching might then be feasible.

In fact, Board C decided against blending; apparently research evidence did play an important role in the decision.

Thus French language outcomes described in the Metro study are relevant to decision-making about immersion program implementation. Results from this large-scale evaluation suggest that middle immersion will yield less consistent levels of performance than early immersion, with middle immersion classes spanning a broader range of scores than early immersion. Thus while the strongest "step-up" students might cope with the demands of a blended class, the majority would likely be left behind. Or, put differently, if the blended class teachers were to "pitch" their teaching to the majority of their students, the early immersion students would indeed be poorly served. Clearly, this constitutes only one piece of information — but one previously unavailable — among others to be taken into account in deciding whether to opt for one program alternative or the other. Social factors, demographic characteristics of particular board populations, and teaching resources must also be taken into consideration (see Lapkin and Swain, 1990).

## Conclusion

One of the subtitles in a recent paper on ESL program evaluation by Beretta (1990) reads "Evaluation and Policy Analysis: The Need for Dialogue". I hope the cases presented here strengthen the plea for an increasing dialogue between school board decision-makers and researchers. Researchers will not always say what administrators and trustees want to hear, but research should constitute a prime component among factors that come into play in implementing immersion or any second or heritage language program. Researchers are aware of constraints imposed by other factors on decisions and sympathetic to policy-makers who must often make decisions that are unpalatable to parents, schools or community groups. If we are informed about the full range of

contextual variables, we will be better equipped to shape our research accordingly and interpret results in ways likely to be helpful to practitioners and decision-makers. ❑

*I am grateful to John Bates, Jean Handscombe, Doug Hart, Bob Kennedy, Phil Nagy, Brad Saunders and Merrill Swain for valuable feedback on earlier drafts of this paper. Please note that the references to the board documents have been omitted from the bibliography so that individual boards cannot be identified. Anyone wishing more information on research reported here is invited to contact me.

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## References

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**Figure 1: A Summary of French Language Tests and Test Measures**

| Test | Skill Area | Test Measure |
|---|---|---|
| Test de compréhension auditive (TCAC) | listening comprehension | count of correct responses to information questions |
| sentence repetition | listening comprehension | global score-semantic accuracy |
| | speaking ability | global score-exact reproduction |
| | | syntactic features |
| | | phonological features |
| | | discursive features (liaisons, syncopes) |
| | | total count of reproduced features |
| open speaking task | speaking ability | task fulfillment (stating and supporting opinion) |
| | | fluency |
| test de mots à trouver (TMTC-cloze) | reading comprehension (an integrative test) | count of 'acceptable' responses to deletions in a text |
| open writing task | writing ability | word count |
| | | task fulfillment (stating and supporting opinion) |
| | | count of non-homophonous spelling and grammar errors |
| | | judgement of 'good writing' |

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| | | phonological features |
| | | discursive features (liaisons, syncopes) |
| | | total count of reproduced features |
| open speaking task | speaking abil | task fulfillment (stating and supporting opinion) |
| | | fluency |
| test de mots à trouver (TMTC-cloze) | reading comprehension (an integrative test) | count of 'acceptable' responses to deletions in a text |
| open writing task | writing ability | word count |
| | | task fulfillment (stating and supporting opinion) |
| | | count of non-homophonous spelling and grammar errors |
| | | judgement of 'good writing' |

**Figure 2: TCAC Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program**

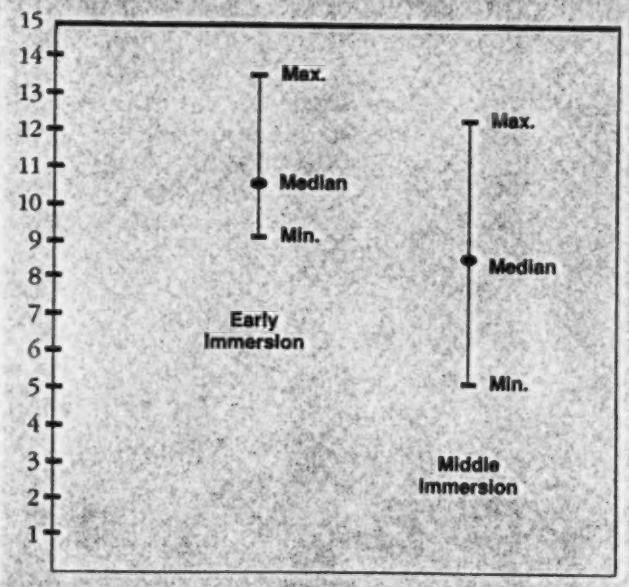



**Figure 3: Global Semantic Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program**

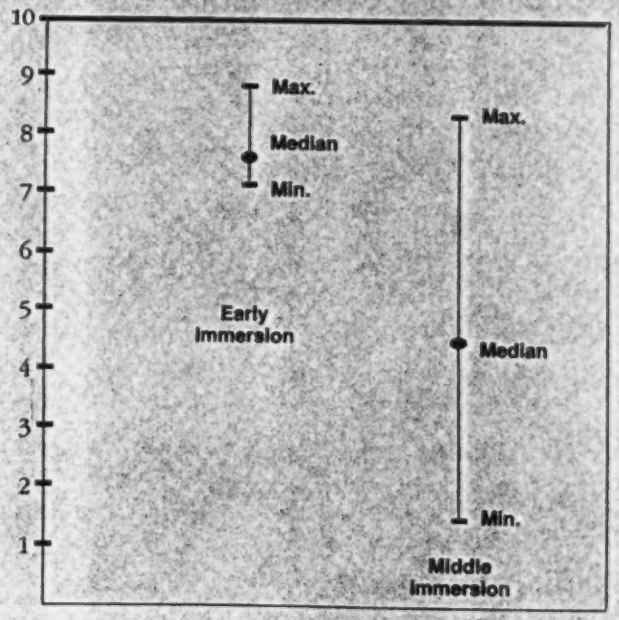



**Figure 4: Sentence Repetition Total Features Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program**

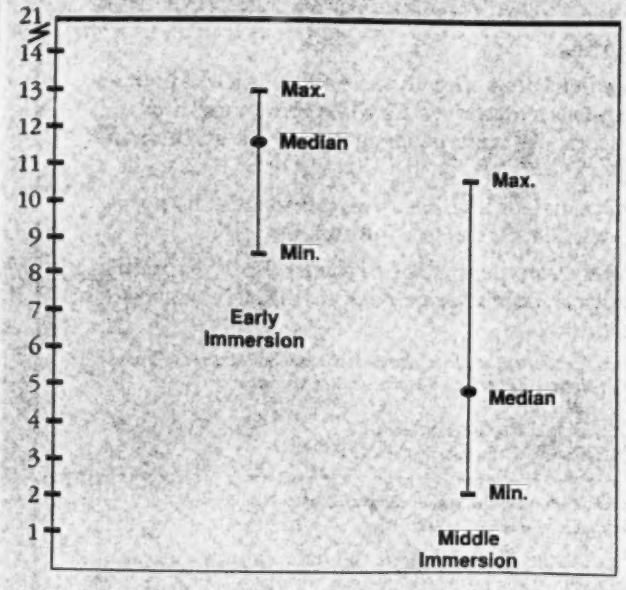



**Figure 5: Open Speaking Fluency Rating Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program**

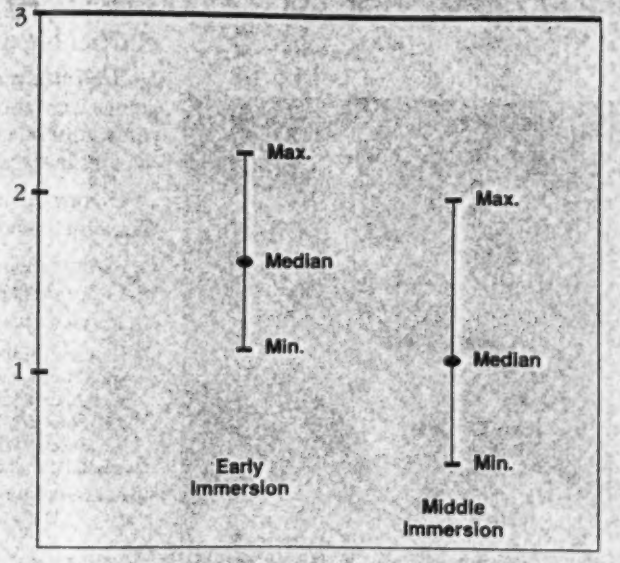


**Figure 6: TMTC (Cloze) Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program**

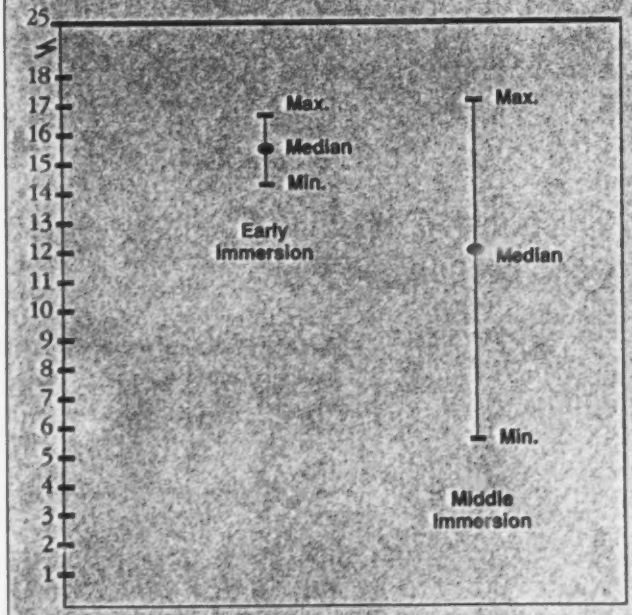
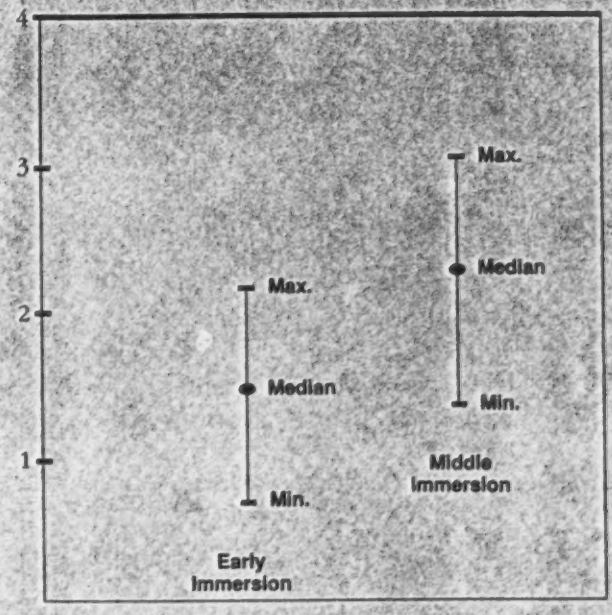
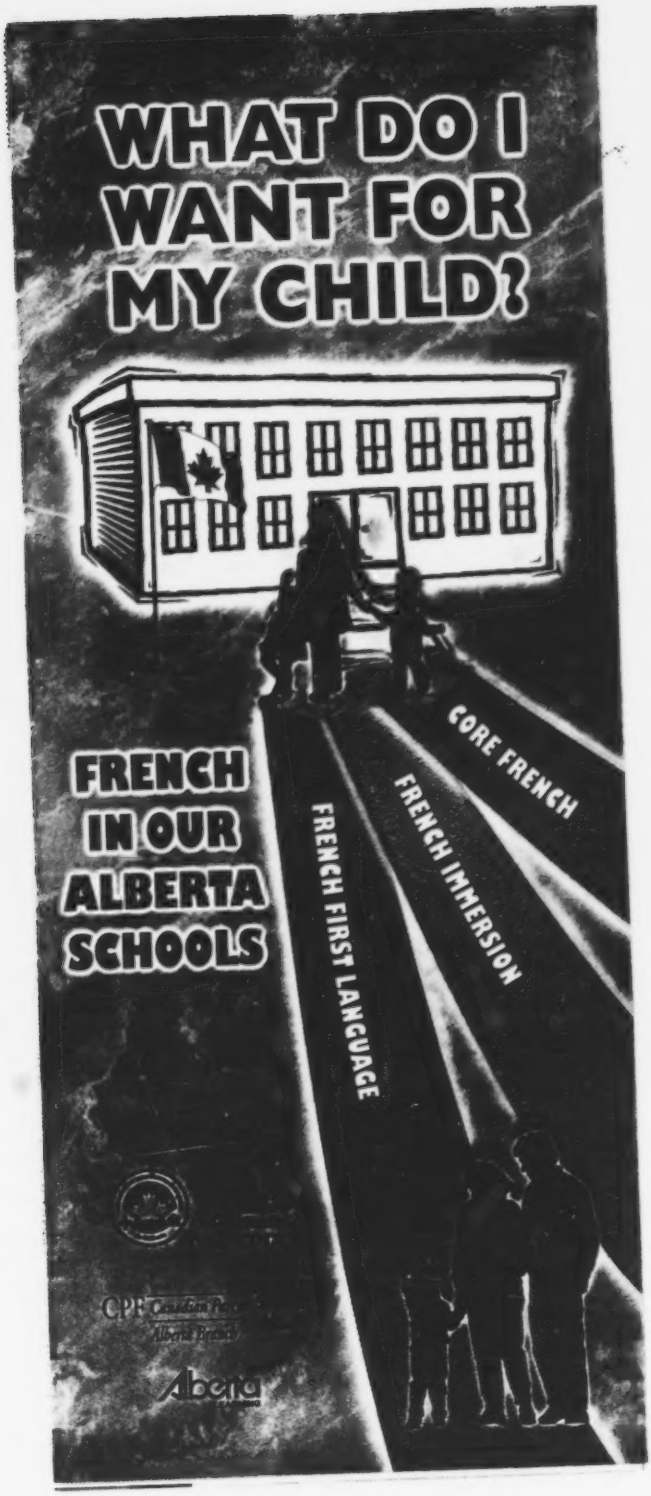



**Figure 7: Written Grammatical Errors Ranges of Class Mean Scores by Program**




WHAT DO I WANT FOR MY CHILD?
FRENCH IN OUR ALBERTA SCHOOLS
FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE
FRENCH IMMERSION
CORE FRENCH

## FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE

### WHAT DO I WANT MY CHILD TO ACHIEVE?

**After completing Grade 12, your child will:**

- Have achieved a high proficiency in and a positive attitude towards French as a first language.
- Identify with and be part of the francophone culture and community.
- Have achieved a high proficiency in English.
- Be able to pursue postsecondary education and work in French, in English, or in both languages.
- Be better able to appreciate other languages, cultures and communities throughout Canada and around the world.

### WHAT APPROACH IS USED?

- Education is offered entirely in French from Kindergarten through Grade 12.
- School environment, programming and extra-curricular activities provide your child with a solid and dynamic focal point for the French language and francophone culture as an extension of family and community life.
- English Language Arts is introduced in the elementary grades. If your child does not have a good grasp of English, assistance will be provided as required.
- The language of communication between home, school and school board is normally French. For the parent who does not speak French, assistance is provided to help you support your child's learning and school experience.

## FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

**After completing Grade 12, your child will:**

- Have achieved a high proficiency in English.
- Have retained his or her own cultural identity.
- Be functionally fluent in French, that is:
  - Be able to live, work and pursue postsecondary education in French.
  - Have an understanding and appreciation of francophone culture.
- Be better able to appreciate other languages, cultures and communities throughout Canada and around the world.

- French is used as the language of instruction for a significant part of each school day; several or all subjects (except, of course, English Language Arts) are taught in French.
- Begins with a period of concentration on French language development to give students a sufficient understanding of French to:
  - Learn to read.
  - Learn other subjects such as math, science, social studies, the fine arts, etc. taught in French.
- School and extra-curricular activities in French may be used to support the development of language skills and cultural appreciation.
- The language of communication between home and school is English.

**After several years, your child will:**

- Have a good foundation in French from which to pursue fluency.
- Have gained insights into and an appreciation of francophone culture.
- Be better able to appreciate other languages, cultures and communities throughout Canada and around the world.

- French is taught as a subject. (Alberta Learning recommends 30–40 minutes of instruction per day.)
- French is used as the language of classroom communication.
- French knowledge and skills are developed through the use of themes and projects geared to the interests, maturity, and life experiences of your child.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**English and French are truly international languages, spoken by an estimated 800 million and 250 million people respectively around the world.**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**language; more than 317,000 Canadian students are in French Immersion and some 1.8 million are in core French.**

## IS IT FOR MY CHILD?

**Intended for a child:**

- Of a parent whose first language learned and still understood is French; or
- Of a parent who received primary school instruction in French anywhere in Canada; or
- Whose sibling has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in French anywhere in Canada.
  (as described in Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*)

(And, in the same spirit, for a child of a parent:

- With francophone roots who wants to reintegrate the French language and francophone identity and culture into his or her child's life; or
- Who wants his or her child to retain French language skills and francophone identity and culture [eg. francophone immigrants who are permanent residents of Canada].)

- Designed for a child whose family heritage is other than French.

- Designed for a child whose family heritage is other than French.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**French and English are the main languages of world diplomacy. • French is an official language of the European Economic Community, the United Nations, and the International Olympic Committee.**

## AT WHAT GRADE LEVEL CAN MY CHILD BEGIN?

- French first language schools begin in Kindergarten or Grade 1, however eligible students may enter at any grade level.
- If your child speaks little or no French, a variety of programs and strategies will be used to help him or her learn French and integrate the francophone culture into everyday living.

- Many schools offer early French immersion beginning in Kindergarten or Grade 1.
- A few schools also offer late French immersion beginning in Grade 6 or 7.

- In schools where it is offered, core French (often referred to as FSL) usually begins in Grade 4, 7 or 10. Some schools begin as early as Kindergarten or Grade 1.
- In some schools all students study core French at certain grade levels (typically Grades 4-6 or Grades 7-9).

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**First language, of these, some 60,000 live in Alberta. • Nearly 5 million Canadians speak both French and English; of these, some 180,000 live in Alberta.**

## WHAT ABOUT ENGLISH?

- The Alberta milieu provides ample opportunity for your child to develop his or her English.
- Reading and writing skills are the same in both languages. Once learned, they are easily transferred from one language to the other.
- French first language, French immersion, and core French students take the same English Language Arts program as all other Alberta students, and are expected to achieve the same standards.

## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

- All subjects taken by French first language, French immersion, and core French students follow the Programs of Study set by Alberta Learning.
- After learning more than one language, your child will have an enhanced ability to learn additional languages.

## WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

No doubt you have many more questions than we can answer here! The following parent guides can help. They offer a wealth of information, inspiration, tips, and ideas for supporting your child's French language development. (These guides have been approved by Alberta Learning.)

**For French first language...**
*Tu peux compter sur moi. Guide à l'intention du parent pour l'accompagnement de l'enfant dans son éducation en français langue première.*
Available through FPFA. (see next panel)

**For French immersion...**
*Yes, You Can Help! A guide for French immersion parents*
Available through LRDC. (see below)

**For core French...**
*French as a Second Language (FSL) Program: A guide for parents*
Available through LRDC. (see below)

Learning Resources Distributing Centre (LRDC)
12360 - 142 Street, Edmonton AB T5L 4X9
Phone: 310-0000 toll free and ask to be connected, or in the Edmonton area call 427-5775
Fax: 780-422-9750
Internet: www.lrdc.edc.gov.ab.ca

## WHO CAN I TALK TO?

For advice, information, and support from experienced parents and experts, call or visit the following organizations.

For information on what is currently available in your area call or visit your nearest public, separate or francophone school board office.

For information on how to bring French first language, French immersion or core French to your area contact:

### CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH, ALBERTA BRANCH (CPF Alberta)

9852A - 33 Avenue, Edmonton AB T6N 1C6
Phone: 1-888-433-6036 or
in the Edmonton area call 433-7311
Fax: 780-433-7306
E-mail: cpfaltaedmonton@cpfalta.ab.ca
Internet: www.cpf.ca

### FÉDÉRATION DES PARENTS FRANCOPHONES DE L'ALBERTA (FPFA)

Room 203, 8627 rue Marie-Anne-Gaboury (91 St.),
Edmonton AB T6C 3N1
Phone: 780-468-6934
Fax: 780-469-4799
E-mail: fpfa@francalta.ab.ca
Internet: www.francalta.ab.ca/fpfa

### ALBERTA LEARNING, FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES BRANCH

11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton AB T5K 0L2
Phone: 310-0000 toll free and ask to be connected, or
in the Edmonton area call 427-2940
Fax: 780-422-1947
E-mail: def@edc.gov.ab.ca
Internet: www.edc.gov.ab.ca

### ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE DE L'ALBERTA (ACFA), SECRÉTARIAT PROVINCIAL

Room 303, 8627 rue Marie-Anne-Gaboury (91 St.),
Edmonton AB T6C 3N1
Phone: 780-466-1680
Fax: 780-465-6773
E-mail: acfa@francalta.ab.ca
Internet: www.francalta.ab.ca/acfa

If you would like additional copies of this brochure, please contact any of the organizations listed above.

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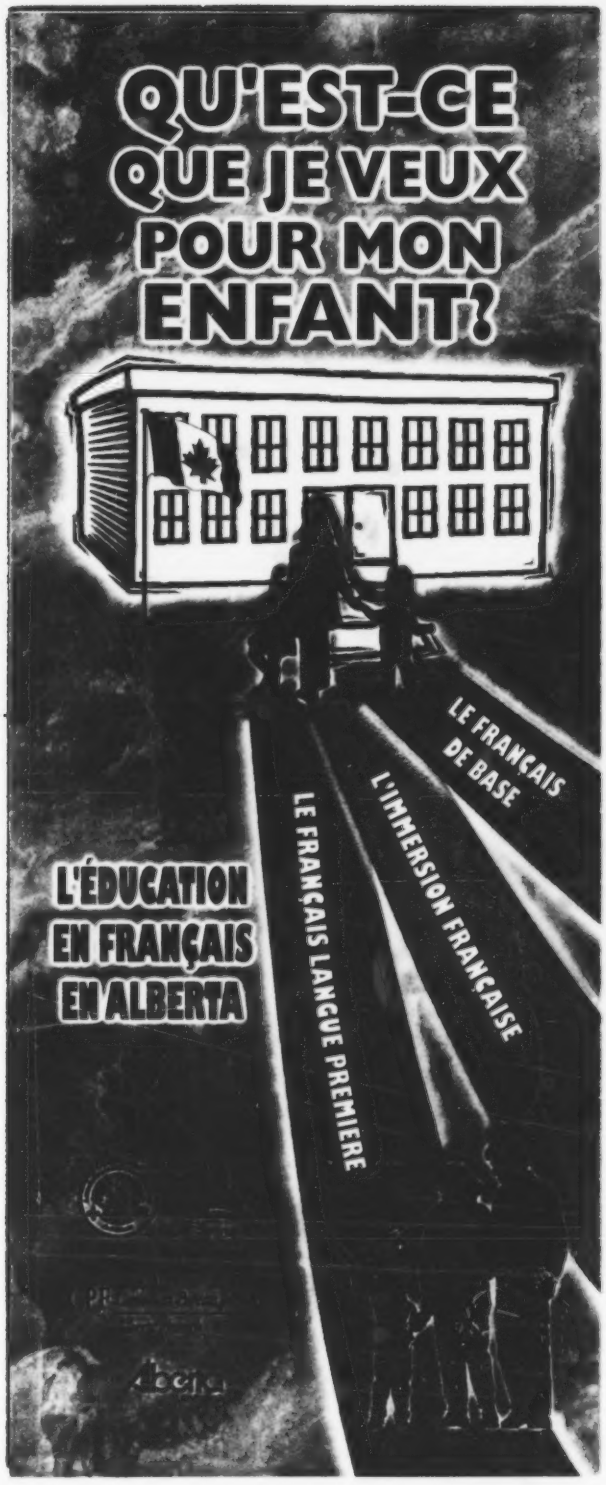
QU'EST-CE QUE JE VEUX POUR MON ENFANT?
LE FRANÇAIS DE BASE
L'IMMERSION FRANÇAISE
LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE PREMIERE
L'ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS EN ALBERTA

# LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE PREMIÈRE

## QUELS SONT LES BIENFAITS POUR MON ENFANT?

**Après avoir complété la douzième année, votre enfant :**

- Aura pleinement maîtrisé le français comme langue première et aura une attitude positive envers celle-ci.
- S'identifiera et s'intégrera à la culture et à la communauté francophones.
- Aura acquis une pleine maîtrise de l'anglais.
- Pourra accéder à des études postsecondaires et à un travail en français, en anglais ou dans les deux langues.
- Pourra apprécier davantage les autres langues, cultures et communautés du Canada et du monde entier.

## QUELLE EST L'APPROCHE UTILISÉE?

- L'éducation est offerte entièrement en français de la maternelle à la douzième année.
- L'enfant retrouve en l'école un milieu scolaire et parascolaire solide et dynamique où la langue française et la culture francophone sont le prolongement de son foyer et de sa communauté.
- Le cours d'anglais est intégré au niveau primaire. Selon les besoins de l'enfant lors de son apprentissage de l'anglais, il bénéficiera si requis, au moment approprié, d'un programme d'appui.
- La langue de communication entre le foyer, l'école et le conseil scolaire est normalement le français. Le parent ne parlant pas le français peut bénéficier de divers programmes et d'outils mis en place par l'école pour accompagner son enfant dans sa vie scolaire.

# LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE SECONDE

**Après avoir complété la douzième année, votre enfant :**

- Aura acquis une pleine maîtrise de l'anglais.
- Aura maintenu son identité et sa culture.
- Aura acquis une connaissance fonctionnelle du français qui lui permettra de :
  - Accéder à des études postsecondaires, vivre et travailler en français.
  - Acquérir une bonne compréhension et une bonne appréciation de la culture francophone.
- Pourra apprécier davantage les autres langues, cultures et communautés du Canada et du monde entier.

- L'enseignement se fait essentiellement en français. Certaines ou toutes les matières scolaires, à l'exception de l'anglais, sont offertes en français.
- Au début, le français est enseigné de façon intensive pour faire en sorte que l'enfant puisse :
  - Apprendre à lire.
  - Acquérir en français les connaissances reliées aux matières scolaires, entre autres les mathématiques, les sciences, les études sociales, les beaux-arts, etc.
- Des activités scolaires et parascolaires peuvent être offertes en français afin de permettre à l'enfant de développer ses habiletés langagières et son appréciation de la culture.
- La langue de communication entre le foyer et l'école est l'anglais.

# LE FRANÇAIS LANGUE ADDITIONNELLE

**Après plusieurs années d'études, votre enfant :**

- Aura acquis des connaissances de base qui lui permettront de poursuivre l'enrichissement de ses connaissances et de ses habiletés reliées à la langue française.
- Aura appris à connaître et à apprécier la culture francophone.
- Pourra apprécier davantage les autres langues, cultures et communautés du Canada et du monde entier.

- Le français est enseigné comme une matière. (Alberta Learning recommande 30–40 minutes d'enseignement en français par jour.)
- L'enseignement en salle de classe se fait en français.
- L'acquisition du français se fait au moyen de thèmes et de projets portant sur le vécu de votre enfant et ses intérêts personnels.

**SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?**

Le français et l'anglais sont des langues véritablement internationales : 800 millions de personnes dans le monde parlent l'anglais et 250 millions de personnes parlent le français.

**SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?**

Plus de 156 000 élèves à l'extérieur du Québec sont inscrits en français langue première; plus de 317 000 élèves au Canada sont inscrits en immersion française et 1,8 million en français de base.

## EST-CE POUR MON ENFANT?

**À l'intention de l'enfant :**

- D'un parent dont la première langue apprise et encore comprise est le français; ou
- D'un parent qui a reçu l'enseignement primaire en français au Canada; ou
- Dont un frère ou une sœur reçoit ou a reçu l'enseignement primaire ou secondaire en français au Canada. (Article 23 de la *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés)*

(Et dans l'esprit de l'article 23 de la Charte, à l'intention de l'enfant de parents :

- Dont les origines francophones les disposent à lui faire réintégrer la langue française, l'identité et la culture francophones; ou
- Qui désirent maintenir la compétence linguistique en français et l'identité culturelle francophone chez l'enfant (par exemple, l'enfant d'un parent immigrant et résident permanent du Canada).)

- Conçu pour l'enfant dont le patrimoine familial est autre que le français.

- Conçu pour l'enfant dont le patrimoine familial est autre que le français.

## À QUEL NIVEAU SCOLAIRE MON ENFANT PEUT-IL DÉBUTER?

- Votre enfant peut faire son entrée dès la maternelle ou la première année ou à tout autre niveau scolaire.
- Si votre enfant parle peu ou pas le français lors de son entrée à l'école, celui-ci bénéficie de divers programmes et d'outils mis en place par l'école, pour l'aider à apprendre le français et à intégrer la culture francophone.

- Plusieurs écoles offrent le programme d'immersion française à compter de la maternelle ou de la première année.
- Quelques écoles offrent l'immersion à partir de la sixième ou de la septième année.

- En général, l'enseignement du français débute en quatrième, septième ou dixième année. Toutefois, certaines écoles initient cet enseignement au niveau de la maternelle ou de la première année.
- Dans quelques écoles, à certains niveaux scolaires, le français de base est offert à tous les élèves et plus particulièrement de la quatrième à la sixième année ou de la septième à la neuvième année.

**SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?**

**• Le français et l'anglais sont les langues principales de la diplomatie mondiale. • Le français est une des langues officielles de la Communauté économique européenne, des Nations Unies et du Comité international olympique.**

**SAVIEZ-VOUS QUE?**

**maternelle de 6,7 millions de Canadiens, dont 60 000 vivent en Alberta. • Près de 5 millions de Canadiens parlent le français et l'anglais, dont 180 000 vivent en Alberta.**

## EST-CE QUE MON ENFANT VA APPRENDRE L'ANGLAIS?

- Il est important de retenir que l'influence du milieu anglophone dans lequel votre enfant vit contribue largement à sa maîtrise de l'anglais.
- L'acquisition des apprentissages reliés à la lecture et à l'écriture est la même en français et en anglais. Votre enfant développe et maîtrise ses habiletés en français et les transfère à l'apprentissage de l'anglais et vice-versa.
- Les élèves inscrits en français langue première, en immersion française et en français de base suivent le même programme d'English Language Arts que celui offert aux autres élèves de la province. Comme tous les élèves albertains, on s'attend à ce qu'ils atteignent les mêmes normes.

## IL EST IMPORTANT DE RETENIR QUE...

- En français langue première, en immersion française et en français de base, l'enseignement de toutes les matières scolaires est offert à l'élève selon le Programme d'études d'Alberta Learning.
- Lorsqu'un enfant acquiert plus d'une langue, il a une meilleure capacité d'apprendre d'autres langues.

## VOUS AVEZ D'AUTRES QUESTIONS?

Ce dépliant ne peut répondre à toutes vos questions concernant l'éducation de votre enfant. Nous vous invitons à consulter les guides suivants conçus à l'intention du parent pour l'accompagnement de votre enfant dans sa vie scolaire. Vous y trouverez des pistes de réflexion, des renseignements et des ressources. (Ces guides sont approuvés par Alberta Learning.)

**En éducation française langue première, consulter :**
*Tu peux compter sur moi. Guide à l'intention du parent pour l'accompagnement de l'enfant dans son éducation en français langue première.*
Disponible auprès de la FPFA.

**En immersion française, consulter :**
*Yes, You Can Help! A guide for French immersion parents*
Disponible auprès du LRDC.

**En français de base, consulter :**
*French as a Second Language (FSL) Program: A guide for parents*
Disponible auprès du LRDC.

**Learning Resources Distributing Centre (LRDC)**
**12360, 142e Rue, Edmonton AB T5L 4X9**

Téléphone : Pour obtenir la communication sans frais, composez d'abord le 310-0000, ou dans la région d'Edmonton, composez le 427-5775.
Télécopieur : 780-422-9750
Internet : www.lrdc.edc.gov.ab.ca

## POUR PLUS D'INFORMATION

Vous pouvez recevoir des renseignements, des conseils et du soutien auprès de parents et de personnes-ressources d'expérience, en communiquant avec les institutions ou organismes suivants.

Pour des renseignements sur l'éducation en français disponible dans votre région, communiquer avec les dirigeants du conseil scolaire public, séparé ou francophone de votre région.

Pour des renseignements concernant l'accès à une éducation en français langue première, en immersion française ou en français de base dans votre région, communiquer avec les institutions ou organismes suivants :

**FÉDÉRATION DES PARENTS FRANCOPHONES DE L'ALBERTA (FPFA)**
Bureau 203 - 8627, rue Marie-Anne-Gaboury (91e Rue), Edmonton AB T6C 3N1
Téléphone : 780-468-6934
Télécopieur : 780-469-4799
Courriel : fpfa@francalta.ab.ca
Internet : www.francalta.ab.ca/fpfa

**CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH, ALBERTA BRANCH (CPF ALBERTA)**
9852A, 33e Avenue, Edmonton AB T6N 1C6
Téléphone : 1-888-433-6036, ou dans la région d'Edmonton, composez le 433-7311
Télécopieur : 780-433-7306
Courriel : cpfaltaedmonton@cpfalta.ab.ca
Internet : www.cpf.ca

**DIRECTION DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE, ALBERTA LEARNING**
11160 avenue Jasper, Edmonton AB T5K 0L2
Téléphone : Pour obtenir la communication sans frais, composez d'abord le 310-0000, ou dans la région d'Edmonton, composez le 427-2940.
Télécopieur : 780-422-1947
Courriel : def@edc.gov.ab.ca
Internet : www.edc.gov.ab.ca/french

**ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE DE L'ALBERTA (ACFA), SECRÉTARIAT PROVINCIAL**
Bureau 303 - 8627, rue Marie-Anne-Gaboury (91e Rue), Edmonton AB T6C 3N1
Téléphone : 780-466-1680
Télécopieur : 780-465-6773
Courriel : acfa@francalta.ab.ca
Internet : www.francalta.ab.ca/acfa

**Pour obtenir d'autres dépliants, veuillez communiquer avec les institutions et les organismes provinciaux ci-dessus.**

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# Appendix B

- Bournot-Trites, Monique, and Ulrike Tallowitz. **"Executive Summary."** *Report of Current Research on the Effect of the Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills.*
  Halifax: The Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation, 2002.
  Reprinted with permission.

- Steel, Victor. **"Re-energizing a French Immersion Program: The Fort McMurray RCSSD Story."** Originally published in a slightly different form in *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
  Reprinted with permission.

- ***When Should English Language Arts be Introduced in the Early French Immersion Program.***
  Nepean: Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers/*Association canadienne des professeurs d'immersion* (CAIT/*ACPI*), n.d.
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This *Executive Summary of the Report of Current Research on the Effect of the Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills* was commissioned by the APEF's committee of French Second Language Curriculum Directors and is reprinted here with permission. The complete report can be found in .pdf format on the APEF website.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

***Report of Current Research on the Effect of the Second Language Learning on First Language Literacy Skills***

***By Monique Bournot-Trites, Ph.D. and Ulrike Tallowitz, M.A.***

## Introduction

The relationship between second language learning and cognitive ability continues to divide opinions. As French immersion is increasingly popular in Canada and other countries, parents, researchers and professionals are asking whether second language learning enhances cognitive development and what are the effects of second language learning on first language literacy skills. In this paper, we present and discuss the results of recent research on the effects of second language learning on first language skills as well as on achievement in non-language domains.

## Various contexts of second language learning

Research on the effects of second language learning has been carried out in two main educational contexts: in submersion and transitional bilingual programmes, as for example in the United States, and in immersion programmes, as in Canada. We will concentrate here on the Canadian context. Immersion programmes and Core French programmes in Canada are bilingual programmes where the first language of the students is generally the majority language in the community. In immersion, all or some of the subjects are taught in the second language. In all cases, the L1 (English) is further developed at school, in the family and in other situations outside of the school.

## Cummin's hypotheses

Most research on the relationship between L1 and L2 learning makes reference to two hypotheses developed by Cummins. **Cummins (1976)** explains his "threshold hypothesis" as follows: The level of L1 and L2 competence of a student determines if he or she will experience cognitive deficits or benefits from schooling in the second language. **Cummins (1979)** defines the "developmental interdependence hypothesis" saying that when the use of the L1 is promoted by the child's linguistic environment outside the school, then a high level of L2 achievement is also likely to occur at no cost of L1 competence. L1 and L2 literacy skills are seen to be interdependent, i.e., they are manifestations of a "common underlying proficiency." High levels of L1 proficiency help L2 acquisition, and conversely, high proficiency in L2 has positive effect on L1 development.

## Effects of learning a second language on first language skills

The question of how second language learning can influence first language literacy skills has been addressed especially in studies on immersion education; a few examples of which are cited here. **Lambert and Tucker (1972)** investigated an early French immersion programme in Montreal (St. Lambert experiment). The goal was to provide English-speaking children with functional competence in both written and spoken French, while at the same time promoting and maintaining normal levels of English development. In grade 1 the immersion students scored significantly lower in English literacy skills. However, this lag disappeared by the end of grade 2 when English instruction had set in. In oral English skills the immersion students did not fall behind at all at any level.

**Genesee and Stanley (1976)** found no significant differences in English composition between immersion students and English programme students. **Genesee (1979)** reports high correlations between L1 and L2 reading skills, and concludes that this proficiency is most likely transferred from one language to the other.

**Swain and Lapkin (1982)** carried out immersion studies in Toronto and Ottawa. The results of their longitudinal study showed that whereas the immersion students seemed to have lower literacy skills than the unilingual students in the first two years, these differences disappeared as soon as English Language Arts were officially introduced into the curriculum in grade 3. In grade 5, the immersion students even outperformed the English-only programme students in some aspects of English language skills. These results were confirmed by **Harley, Hart, and Lapkins (1986)**.

In a more recent study, **Reeder, Buntain, and Takakuwa (1999)** examined the effect increased use of French instruction in an early immersion programme in Vancouver, and found that the high amount of instruction in French did not lead to significant differences in English writing skills.

In a report to the Ontario Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), **Hart, and Lapkin (2000)** conducted an evaluation of French immersion education with respect to its effect on English literacy and mathematics. The results showed that grade 3 immersion students performed at a comparable level with English programme students in both reading and writing. By grade 6, immersion students clearly outperformed the regular programme students in all skill areas.

In other parts of the World, the relationship of students' L2 and L1 have been investigated as well. **Verhoeven (1994)** observed Turkish children living in the Netherlands and found that reading abilities showed a strong positive transfer from L1 to L2. In Hong Kong, **Marsh et al. (2000)** compared students who were instructed in Chinese with students who received instruction in English, and found that the achievement of the first language (Chinese) and second language (English) were enhanced through instruction in English. The intensive instruction in a second language did not hinder in any way the development of the first language; on the contrary, it promoted its development.

In conclusion, one can say that the studies generally confirm Cummins" hypotheses. Students in immersion and enrichment programmes reach a "functional bilinguality" in their second language, with no loss in their L1. In fact, L1 competency are usually enriched when compared to control groups who have been schooled in English only.

### Effect of learning a second language on non-language domains

**Swain and Lapkin (1982)** used standardized tests in mathematics and science, and compared the performance of immersion students with that of students in English-only programmes. Early immersion students consistently showed results comparable to the unilingual students.

One study indicates negative effects of instruction in English (second language) on mathematics achievement and other non-language subjects (history, Geography, and Science in the Hong Kong by **Marsh et al.(2000)** mentioned. The authors argue that the programme "was a failure in terms of providing academic benefits for Hong Kong students, as well as supporting predictions based on previous immersion research and Cummins' theory" (p.339). However, the results of this study, even though significant and important, could not be expected to yield results generalisable to the Canadian context, which is quite different. First, this study concerned late immersion starting at the high school level where the threshold of L2 competency needed to achieve benefits from immersion might be much higher than the threshold needed in early immersion (Cummins, 1979). Second, the language achievement level of immersion students relative to that of other students was measured with only written tests and there was no indication of the student's oral fluency (listening and speaking). Third, as the programme was near-universal, with little ESL 'bridging' instruction available to students entering from Chinese language programmes, it is possible that both low initial student proficiency in English and lack of L2 support compromised students' content learning. Finally, the authors indicate that the teachers of nonlanguage subjects may not all have been highly fluent in English. None of the Core French of immersion

programmes in Canada have such negative characteristics. Clearly this study does not change the fact that learning a second language in the Canadian context has positive consequences.

**Bournot-Trites and Reeder (2001)** addressed parents' concerns about whether their children's achievement in mathematics would not suffer when taught in French instead of in English. When assessed on their math achievement with English tests, the group with high intensity French obtained higher results than the comparison groups. **Turnbull et al. (2000)** and **de Courcy & Burston (2000)** in Australia showed very similar findings.

## Conclusion

The effect of learning a second language (e.g. French) on first language skills has been virtually positive in all studies. Although most studies on the effect of second language learning on first language literacy have been done in the area of French immersion education, one can also apply the findings to Core French and intensive French programmes.

The loss of instructional time in English in favour of the second language has never been shown to have negative effects on the achievement of the first language. Cummins' interdependence hypothesis, which maintains that language skills are being transferred from one language to the other, can be assumed to be true for the core French situation as well. One can confidently assume that cognitive abilities acquired in the learning of one language can be put to use in the acquisition and proficiency of the other language. In many studies first language skills were shown to be enhanced, even if instruction time in L1 was reduced in favour of L2 instruction.

Source: <http://www.caslt.org/research/executivesum.htm>. Reprinted with permission.

# Re-energizing a French Immersion Program
# The Fort McMurray RCSSD Story

VICTOR STEEL
PROGRAMS COORDINATOR, FORT MCMURRAY RCCSD

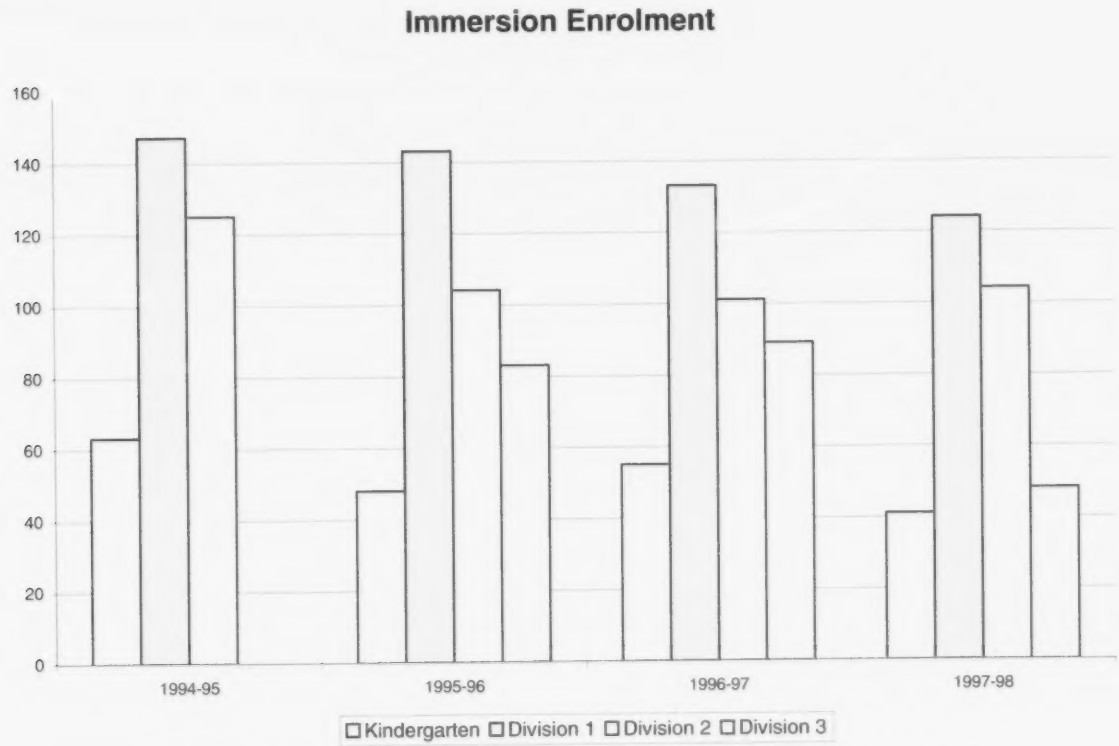
## Introductory Remarks

This session is process oriented. A good process is the key to effective re-energizing.

## The Wake-up Call

Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District has offered French immersion since 1980–81. We offer the program in two elementary-junior high schools, and a minimal program in Grade 9 at the senior high school. The parents and teachers of our French immersion program were satisfied; achievement scores were high. After 19 years of French immersion the quality of our program was not the problem.

However, despite our success our wake-up call was the declining number of students in our program. We experienced declining student numbers over the past four years, particularly at the Grade 9 level. For example, in 1997–98 we had 83 Grade 8 students, but only 38 in Grade 9.




Note: In 1994-95 Division 3 students were counted in with the Francophone students.

* Originally published in a slightly different form in *French Immersion in Alberta. Building the Future: Leading the Way, Conference Report 2000*, pp 241–252

In November 1998, a team of administrators from our district attended the first *Building the Future Conference*, at which administrators from around the province were addressing similar declining trends. Following this conference, our team met with Richard Slevinsky of French Language Services, Alberta Learning to discuss plans to address this attrition. Following this meeting our team, which included our superintendent by the way, began work on a four-part initiative to revitalize the French immersion program in Fort McMurray Catholic Schools.

The following description accounts for the process and decisions of our revitalization process.

## Setting a Context

### *Geographic context*

Geography affects the sociology of a city.

The physical geography of Fort McMurray is such that communities/suburbs are separated by river valleys and highways. We are a one-industry town of relative wealth and high expectations. Our population of some 43,000 is young and transient. Most parents have had a mixed school experience. Many children we teach were born elsewhere.

### *Historical context*

Our Catholic district and the public district are approximately the same size and we have a history of competition. The public board offers French immersion in one centre, but no high school program. We offer French immersion to Grade 10 in three centres.

### *The Sociological Context*

I want to tell you a little bit about the sociology of our district, but first a comment about the expectation of parents. Expectations are very high in our district and we encourage it. We want our parents to have high expectations. They do as citizens and they do as workers. People come to our town with high expectations. It's all part of the ethos of Fort McMurray.

Part of this case study is the sociological context: the people. In 1990 the Catholic Board of Education authorized administration to study the feasibility and desirability of delivering the French immersion program in a French immersion centre K–9. The study was done during the 1990/91 school year; in 1991 the results were presented to the board.

Victor Steel

But we need to keep certain sociological and psychological aspects in mind. Fort McMurray has no traditions. If you want to do something, do it. Try it. The average age of the teaching population in Fort McMurray when I arrived in 1981 was 25 years old. If you saw people walking down the street with white hair, they were visiting grandparents. They were not residents. You knew that. And every family was really one generational. Parents and their children. Or just adults, because there was a huge population of single people. In the early 1990s, probably 75 percent of our students were not born in Fort McMurray and probably not in Alberta. The population in Fort McMurray grew from 800 in 1958 to nearly 40,000 in 1978. So everybody was young. Now think of the consequences of this for the experience level of French immersion teachers or any teachers. Two, three years in the city denoted a veteran! Turnover was constant with many teachers putting in their two years to get their permanence, then moving to central and southern Alberta.

That can be an asset as well as a liability. The liability is obvious in terms of just gelling and having consistencies within programs. The asset was that we could change who we were within two years. There was no tradition. You could do just about anything you wanted. Consequently it was a dynamic and changing community.

Let's look at the feasibility study and you'll get a better idea of the people we're dealing with here. The report deals with some key elements: Getting a handle on the program. The advantages, disadvantages of the French immersion centre. Where it was going to be housed. The economic perspectives. The public reaction to the concept. The options available for future growth. Insights into French immersion centres. This last was researched and there are some references there about what data was looked at for French immersion centres. And then, of course, the merits. If you would just take a few moments to read through the merits of a French immersion centre (please see Attachment). Notice that under program quality and organizational logistics there are only two disadvantages as opposed to six advantages. So you think. "Wow! It is obvious what we are going to do. Isn't it?" By the time you get to page 19, you realize there are far fewer disadvantages than there are advantages.

The report includes a summary of public input. You'd likely find that you've had this discussion in your district. Parents have the same concerns everywhere:

- Not being close to your own community so that if a child gets sick or needs a parent, they are far away
- Programs in existing schools are very high quality
- Too much time on buses
- Travelling on the bus in the dark and in very cold temperatures
- Why not move the program to St. Paul school, because that's in the growth area.
- The segregation aspect
- Parents believe the board has already decided

At the time, 1990, we were an extremely wealthy board, and that played a role. That's no longer true due to the changes to provincial equalization of school funding. But, at the time, it was an important factor.

What did the study conclude? The population projections were off, of course. In a one-industry, resource-based community dependent on oil prices, nobody knows whose coming and who's not coming. In fact, we are in that situation again right now, with a third oil sands plant having been promised. Nobody knows numbers for sure. I know you all go through the numbers game every September, but we go through it in spades! Yet the conclusion of the consultants' report was to go with the French immersion centre. But there was the back door clause, recommendation #4. That is, "Based on the results of the second round of information meetings and analysis of the data contained in this report, the board should determine whether to proceed in September '92 with the implementation of the major recommendation of the report (that is, a French immersion centre); or maintain the status quo for another three to five more years and re-evaluate the issue at that time."

What did they do? In 1992 the Catholic Board of Education agreed to maintain the status quo for three to five years. It was tough, but it may have been the wisest decision, because the indications were that if we went to a centre the enrolment in the French immersion program would have dropped.

## Decisions

Now a brief overview of our revitalization project. The four elements of the revitalization plan are: expansion, maintenance, communication and professional development—a four-pronged approach to solving our problem. Nothing profound.

Expansion of the French immersion program involves offering courses at Father Mercredi that allow students the opportunity to take 25% of their high school credits in the French language. Students would have French language instruction in high school Language Arts and Social Studies beginning in September 1999. We expanded at the Grade 9 level to four core subjects taught in French in the French immersion program. Students said they would stay with the program and they did.

Maintenance of the present (and past) programs of instruction in the French language from Kindergarten to Grade 8 at St. Paul's School and Father Beauregard School is essential, as is restoring the French immersion program, with four core subjects, at Father Mercredi School for Grade 9 for September 1999. Maintenance: there's that continuity again. A new element in our community, considering so much change is always happening. Nevertheless, what we're promising is that we are going to maintain those programs in the neighbourhood schools, as the parents asked.

Communication of what French immersion programs do for students and their education, along with the commitment that this school district has to revitalizing their programming, is important. Elements such as district policy, teacher recruitment, student incentives, staff responsibility and parental involvement to promote the benefits would all need to be articulated in a formal strategic plan. Communication is a continuing effort—we're trying to change the perspective that it's not an elitist program.

Professional development opportunities need to support the expansion and revitalization initiatives and should be in place at the same time as program changes, in this case September 1999. That was the last and biggest part of the puzzle, the professional development of our

teachers. Remember I said that the ethos of our teaching staff was two years in, get your permanence certificate, go teach in Calgary? Professional development of teaching staff and the resulting program stability has helped the confidence of parents. To be able to keep teachers for three and more years shows them that this is a good program.

How do we handle the financing of all of this and who decides? We are very decentralized. All of the money flows through our central office to the schools. Site-based decision-making is alive and well in Fort McMurray. We're allowed, in Alberta, to use up to 4% of funding for district administration. We have never used the full 4%. So even some of these funds go to the schools. Now that doesn't mean that we have oodles of money. But we've been able to maintain programs with small numbers, because all the money that is available is passed directly to the schools. Our central administration consists of our Secretary-Treasurer, my superintendent and me. That's it. Now we have a religious coordinator and a technology person, but those are paid by shared services, which is the money allocated directly to the schools. It is not top heavy at all. So the decisions at the high school, for example, were made by the principal of the high school. He promised that he would reshuffle the books and try to support these programs no matter how small the numbers were for the next three years, to see if we could turn it around.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the decision to maintain the French immersion program in our district as three small programs at three schools rather than at one large centre is based on respecting the context of our city's geography, sociology and our shareholder's long standing expectations of the school system. Despite the economic advantages for putting it into one centre, we have realized other advantages for maintaining a more diversified approach for delivering French immersion throughout our school district.

### Facilitator: Dr. Art Schwartz, University of Calgary

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. French immersion is a proven success. Let's build on that success and advocate that success.

   Rationale: A track record of success proves better than anything else that it can be done.

2. Involve all partners in ways that value and recognize their long-term concerns and commitment (12 years for parents).

   Rationale: Recognition provides the rewards that sustain commitment, and that keep people working.

3. Cultivate strong, knowledgeable and comfortable moral and financial commitments at all levels of government, district and school administration.

Rationale: The support of both elected and employed officials is most dependable when it is given freely because people believe in French immersion, rather than because they feel pressured or compelled. We should be working to establish and sustain that belief.

ATTACHMENT

# Excerpts from Western Management Consultants' Report to the Fort McMurray Catholic Board of Education

## *E. Analysis of the Merits of the French Immersion Centre Concept*

This section of the report summarizes the major program quality, operational, social/political and economic advantages and disadvantages of the French Immersion Centre concept in general. It does not address the implications of specific locations. That task is completed in Section F of the report.

### Program Quality

**Advantages:**

1. Everything in the French Immersion Centre is designed to serve the immersion program. As a result, the degree of immersion in the French language and culture is greater.

2. Students in French Immersion Centres demonstrate superior performance compared with their dual or triple track counter parts on several French and English language skill acquisition measures.

3. Student retention in French Immersion programs is greater than in alternate structures (i.e., fewer drop outs).

4. Locating all French Immersion programming in one school facilitates a more coordinated approach to program development, delivery and evaluation.

   Elimination of the duplication of library materials and instructional resources improves the quality of the French Immersion library and the breadth of available instructional resources.

6. At present many French Immersion students are required to attend their K through grade six program with the same class, since small numbers in each grade do not allow the formation of more than 1 class at each grade level. An amalgamated program would increase the number of students at each grade thus allowing students to experience a greater variety of classmates during their elementary program.

**Disadvantages:**

1. Since the French Immersion enrollment at the junior high level is usually smaller, junior high students have more limited opportunities for social interaction with students their age.

2. Segregating the French Immersion and English programs may be viewed as detracting from cultural tolerance and understanding.

Operational Logistics

**Advantages:**

There is more effective and efficient utilization of instructional resources.

2. Larger enrollments permit the reduction of the number of split grades in both the French Immersion and English programs.

3. More efficient deployment of teaching and administrative staff results in some staff reductions.

4. Organizing both French and English programs is made easier in that:

   class sizes are usually more consistent;

   scheduling and time tabling is usually easier.

5. Staff recruitment challenges associated with the French Immersion program are reduced in that only one set of bilingual administrators, one counsellor, one librarian, etc., are required.

6. Providing high quality, focussed and relevant teacher in-service training is much easier since all French Immersion program staff are in one school.

**Disadvantages:**

A larger number of French Immersion students usually have to be bused out of their neighborhood.

2. There are limited options for teachers wishing to have an opportunity to work in another school.

Social/Political

**Advantages:**

1 Forming an Immersion Centre is a long-term commitment to the French Immersion program by the Board.

**Disadvantages:**

1. Parental reaction to increasing the number of students transported out of their home neighborhood will likely be negative.

2. There is potential for backlash from English program parents who may view the formation of an immersion centre as giving French Immersion program special treatment.

3. There is potential to create disharmony between English and French Immersior program parents and students.

Economic

**Advantages**

1. Increased efficiency occurs as a result of reduced duplication of resources.

2. Increased efficiency occurs as a result of reductions in staff.

3. Increased efficiency occurs as a result of improved program coordinatior organization and staff in-service.

**Disadvantages:**

1. There are potential increases in transportation costs depending upon location.

2. There is potential to lose students and revenue as a result of parents not supporting the concept.

Summary

A review of current research literature, combined with the expert opinions of Alberta Education second language consultants suggests that the French Immersion Centre concept offers some significant advantages from a program quality standpoint. In addition, there are a number of significant operational advantages and economic benefits to implementing the concept.

The major disadvantages relate to the potential increase in the number of students being transported out of their home communities, negative public reaction to the disruption of schools and programs that are viewed as "working well", and the potential for the development of an Immersion Centre to have a negative affect with respect to the integration of the French and English cultures.

To completely understand the magnitude of the program, operational and economic implications of implementing the French Immersion Centre concept in the Fort McMurray Catholic School District, it is necessary to do a detailed analysis of the implications relative to potential locations. The next section of this report addresses this task. Please note that relative advantages and disadvantages identified in this section apply to all of the options discussed in the next section as well as the location-specific implications delineated.

# When Should English Language Arts be Introduced in the Early French Immersion Program?

No final answer to the question of when English should be introduced in Early French Immersion programs exists as yet. The evidence that can be brought to bear on the issue thus far is limited.

## Research Not Definitive

Variety characterizes the program structure of early French immersion in Canada, particularly in the area of the introduction of English language arts. Although there has been much discussion, there has been little empirical research on the topic of when it is best for the students in these early years to be taught literacy skills in English.

The introduction of early French immersion in the 1970s inspired an interest in the sequence of teaching reading in English and in French in a few researchers whose studies were for the most part inconclusive. After that, the great bulk of research was focused on demonstrating that both the English and French skills of students remaining in immersion were satisfactory. Recently a new interest in the topic of the introduction of English has emerged and a few researchers are again investigating how different sequence combinations of learning to read affect the skills, motivation, and retention of students in French immersion programs.

It should not be surprising that there is not conclusive research evidence regarding the introduction of English language arts in early French immersion. Cummins and Swain (1986) have described the complex interaction of variables in bilingual education settings. In such a complex environment, many years of gathering information are necessary before the field can be adequately mapped to enable specific decisions to be made based on theory. Indeed, Clark (1994) recognized the need for continued seeking out of information in his call for caution and debate.

This interest in introducing English reading in Grade 1 of the French immersion program is based on the ideas that students will read in English more easily, will transfer learning across languages, will be more confident and will be able to move to an English program more easily.

## Sufficient Exposure to French

For others the concerns are whether the amount of time taken from the French instruction will interfere with proficiency in French and how much negative impact the teaching of English will have on the French immersion environment.

Few conclusive studies have been found that identified a threshold level of number of hours that could be taken from French instruction before harm is done to proficiency, although The Modern Language Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has in their scoring service data that suggests there may be

a threshold of instructional time necessary to achieve measurable progress in French (Hart & Lapkin, in preparation). In any French immersion program it is important to monitor and try to control the informal English that interrupts the immersion aspects of the school experience.

**Reading and the Transfer of Skills**

There is some suggestion that anglophone students have a more positive attitude to reading in English. This has been used in arguments for and against introducing English language arts in Grade 1. Many studies have found evidence of transfer of reading skills from any one language to another. There is no bank of data that shows that transfer happens more efficiently or quickly either from French to English or from English to French in the early primary grades. Several studies suggest that the language of instruction is not as important as the tailoring of the instruction to the level at which the student is reading.

**Program Structures Vary**

Four approaches for introducing English language arts in early French immersion are evident in the practices of Canadian school boards.

*Approach 1: Teach formal reading in French in Grade 1 and delay English language arts instruction until Grade 2, 3, or 4.*

This approach is the most popular across Canada. The majority of school boards in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland/Labrador start teaching French immersion students to read in the second language first. Academic achievement and French and English proficiency results have been more than satisfactory according to board standards as shown repeatedly in board reports. Some recent examples of such reports are those by Fine (1992), Gaudet and Pelletier (1993), and Alberta Education (1992).

*Approach 2: Teach formal English reading and informal French language arts in Grade 1 with formal French reading introduced in Grade 2.*

Manitoba has been teaching English language arts in Grade 1 for 10 years. Manitoba has dealt with transference (learning processes applied from one situation to another) and interference (hindrance in performance due to application of a process not suitable to the situation) in their English language arts curriculum by identifying and listing transferences and interferences so teachers can capitalize on transferences and recognize and correct interferences.

In a Saskatoon, Saskatchewan study, Noonan and Colleaux (1994) compared Grade 1 early French immersion students who had been introduced to English language arts in Grade 1 with those who had begun in Grade 2. They found that when tested at the end of Grade 3 there were no differences in the vocabulary, spelling and reading tests of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills in English and the word recognition , reading and spelling tests of the Test Diagnostique de Lecture in French. As a result of the study, the board decided not to mandate one option or the other. Schools can choose the program that suits them. This approach has also been used in at least two Ontario boards.

*Approach 3: Concurrent learning to read.*

The Calgary Separate School Board introduces both French reading and English reading in Grade 1. The regular French immersion Grade 1 program includes one hour a day of English instruction. There are 30 minutes a day in religion and 30 minutes a day in English language arts with a focus on reading and writing. These practices were put in place in 1993 after a three-year pilot study. A group of 15 students that received an hour a day of English language arts started off slowly in the two languages but by the end of Grade 2 out performed other students. Caution must be used in generalizing from this small group.

The Fort McMurray Separate Board in Alberta and St. Albert Catholic Board in Alberta both implemented a concurrent reading program in Grade 1 and both boards are conducting a longitudinal study of the effects and results. The Fort McMurray study will be finished at the end of 1995. The St. Albert final report will be ready for publication in June, 1996.

The English outcomes of the half English and half French program of the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board were evaluated in the early 1980s. At that time it was found that the program was not detrimental to English language arts.

*Approach 4: Teach reading in French first with informal language development in English oral and listening skills.*

The Calgary Catholic Board had this approach until 1993. Until 1993, except for an experimental class from 1989 to 1992, there were 30 minutes of English language arts oral and listening skills in Grade 1. The results of this board's annual standardized testing in French and English have been above the provincial standard for many years. After conducting a pilot study the board changed their program to that of approach 3, in which students were taught to read concurrently.

**Remediation for Immersion Students**

For those who are concerned about progress and attrition of students in the early French immersion program there is the question of how to help students having difficulty. Remedial help in French is not always available in school boards. Many professionals have called for improved service in this area. The lack of remedial services has led some to believe that English language arts in Grade 1 could have a positive effect on retention of students because students would learn to read faster in English and transfer their skills to French. On the other hand, some see remedial services as replacing the need for English language arts in the Grade 1 immersion program.

It may be that different sequences of the language used in learning to read suit different types of learners. Without research to illuminate this idea, a school board may need to explore what will benefit its students through pilot projects. In committing to such an endeavour, it is wise for a board to be aware of as many aspects of the issue as possible including communication, publicity, curriculum adaptation, resources, inservice, staffing, budget, monitoring the impact of the proposed change, and teacher training.

## Conclusions

More empirical studies are needed; however, the existing research literature points to the conclusion that no one approach will best meet the needs of each individual student. School boards

faced with making policy decisions might best provide the greatest flexibility possible given their circumstances. Importantly, in the decision-making process, the creation of the immersion environment can not be overlooked for its contribution to motivating young students to communicate in French, which is the primary goal of the French immersion program. Therefore, the number of hours of instruction in French and the amount of English impinging on the program need to be weighed very carefully. It is important to keep in mind that there is a large body of research demonstrating that for students who heretofore have typified the population and have remained in immersion, there is no harm to English language skills.

The full report *Introducing English Language Arts in Early French Immersion* by Dr. Nancy Halsall and Elaine O'Reilly is available from the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, 72 Robertson, P.O. Box 26148, Nepean, Ontario K2H 5Y8, telephone 613-727-6933, fax 613-727-8937.

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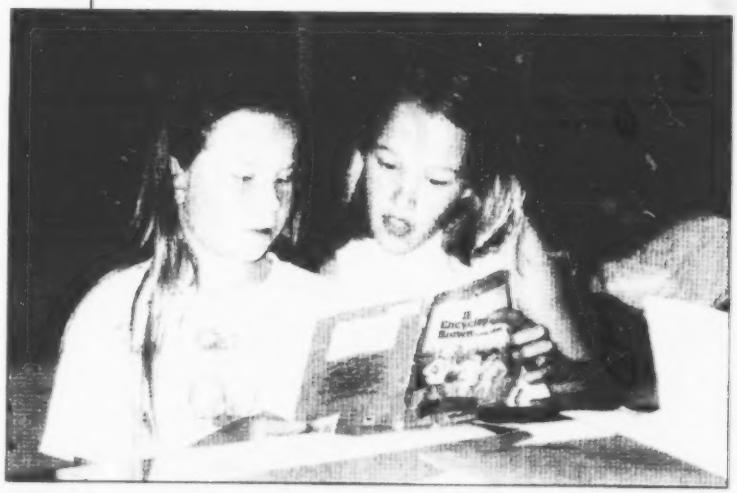

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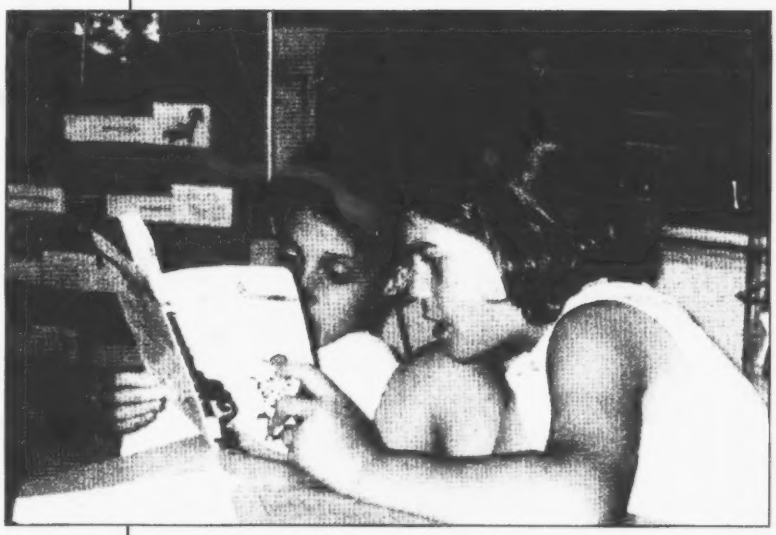

*Photography by*
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# Appendix C

- Brackenbury, Jim. **"Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams: Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
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# Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams Results and Implications for French Immersion Programs

**Jim Brackenbury**
**Director, Learner Assessment Branch, Alberta Learning**

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

I will begin with a brief overview of the provincial achievement testing program and diploma examinations program.

Alberta has had quite a comprehensive provincial assessment program in place for a number of years. We have a diploma examinations program at the Grade 12 level consisting of government exams in eleven different courses. The mark on those exams counts as 50% of a student's final mark in each of these courses. As you will appreciate, this program is perceived by students and teachers as a very high-stakes testing program. It definitely affects the individual futures of the students involved. So everybody takes the diploma examinations program quite seriously. Most of the exams are written in English, but we do have French translations of the math, sciences and social studies exams that students may write in French (please see box). Immersion students may choose to write in French or English. We also have Français 30 that is its own program and exam, the equivalent of English 30. While this course and exam are designed and intended for francophone students, we have French immersion students challenging the exam each year. We are now developing a French

### *Translating Diploma Exams and Achievement Tests*

Once a test is set in English, it is translated into French. We work very closely with our French Language Services Branch staff to validate it. We bring in a committee of French teachers to give us the classroom validation, that is things like whether or not the vocabulary works in a real Grade 6 classroom. Quite often, if we run into a problem translating a work into French, it is because there is some conceptual wording problem in English. But we can go back and revise the English, when we run into such problems. Also, when these concerns arise, our translators are very good about asking the exam writer what it is we are trying to measure and working from there. All of this helps us with our quality control on the English version of the test as well as the French.

After the fact we do an item analysis on both the English version of the test and the French translation. We have very rigorous technical standards that individual test items have to meet. If they don't meet them, we automatically flag the items. Our procedures show us what didn't work properly. It is rare, but it happens. If we find something untoward, our experts sit down and decide whether it is a wording problem. Rarely, we will throw out an item, or we might double-key it. If it is a translation problem, and we didn't represent the meaning accurately, in other words it has not affected the English version, we will throw out that item in the French version, but keep it in the English. Again, this is very rare.

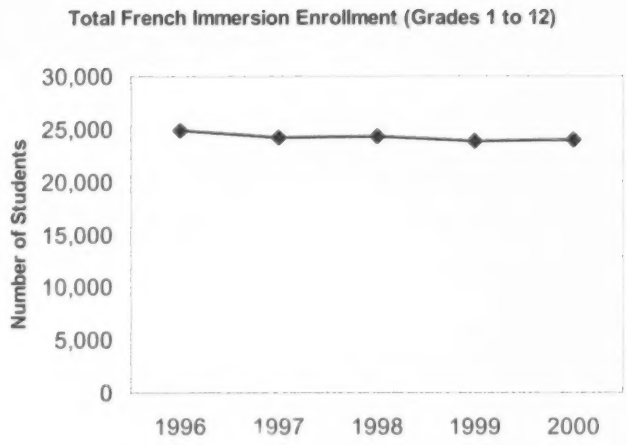


Exhibit 1 French Immersion Enrolment, 1996–2000

Language Arts 30 exam for French immersion students so that it can properly appear on their transcripts in the future.

Besides the diploma examination program, we have a provincial achievement testing program. Children in grades 3, 6 and 9 (including public and separate schools, home education, cyber schools, and private and charter schools) write our provincial achievement tests. All children in those grades are expected to write the exam. The local superintendent of schools may, however, excuse individual students from writing, if participation would be harmful or if they cannot respond to the test either in its original form or in an approved modified version. Our participation rates are quite high, in the mid-ninety percent range in Grades 3 and 6 and around 90% in Grade 9. In large-scale testing these participation rates are pretty robust. In Grade 3, children write achievement tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics. If they are in francophone or immersion programs, they are expected to write the math test in their language of instruction. In Grade 6 we have English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and French Language Arts. The immersion students are expected to write in their language of instruction in the content areas.

Alberta's basic policy for achievement tests is that if the language of instruction is French, then students should write the test in French. Most do. Research over a period of years, in which some immersion students wrote a test in French and some in English, provides good evidence that students get higher marks if they write in English. But when we expanded the achievement testing program in 1995, so that it covered all of the subjects each year rather than just one on a rotating basis every four years, we found the schools saying they did not want some of their immersion students writing in English and some writing in French. They

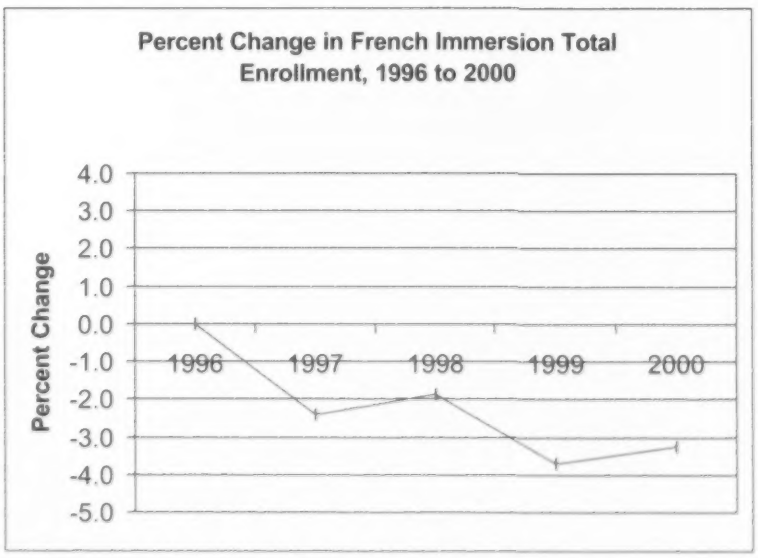


Exhibit 2 Percent Change in Enrolment, 1996–2000

wanted them all writing in the same language, so their results can be looked at as a whole. So we decided that since French immersion is about studying in French, the students should write in French. Everybody goes into it with their eyes open. We know that if they write in English they would do a little better, but I will show you evidence later that we don't have a lot to worry about when they are writing in French (please see Exhibits 19 & 22; see also, Living the Dream Panel, Brian Hall).

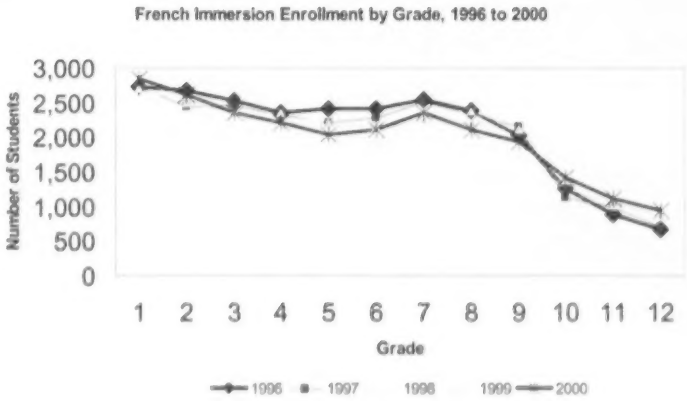


Exhibit 3 Enrolment by Grade, 1996–2000

When we report the results, we are reporting the percentage of students meeting standards. We report in two sets for the achievement testing program: for the students who wrote in English and for the students who wrote in French. One table in the report also breaks the overall results down into various programs and groups. So with this you can see how the immersion students in your district did, as compared with those in the rest of the province. You get the overall results plus the breakdown. Other tables in the report give performance on a question-by-question basis as well as by different reporting categories. The last table gives quite a detailed breakdown for each student, so you can see their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Achievement testing has its place, but keep it in its place. Achievement tests and diploma exams are not the be-all and end-all of school performance, but they shouldn't be dismissed. They are important pieces of information, but they are only part of the story of school excellence and of the success of a French immersion program.

With this in mind, let's look at some of the data on enrolment trends, course completions and pass rates, high school diplomas awarded, participation rates in achievement tests, performance on achievement tests, and performance on diploma exams.

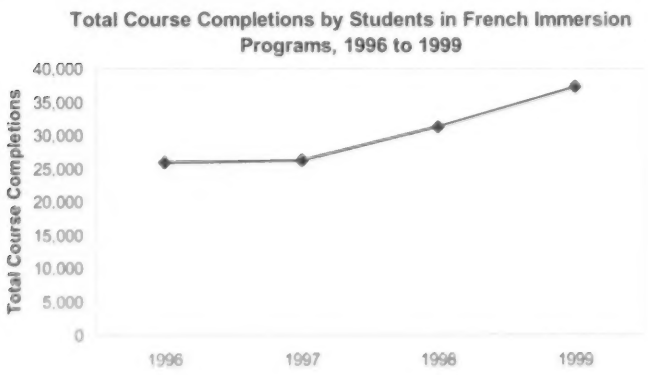


Exhibit 4 Course Completions, 1996–2000

When you look at the French immersion enrolment trend data in this type of graph (please see Exhibit 1), you can see that it is pretty flat. It shows a slight drop from 1996 to 1997 and since then it has been steady. Looking at that data in a slightly different way (please

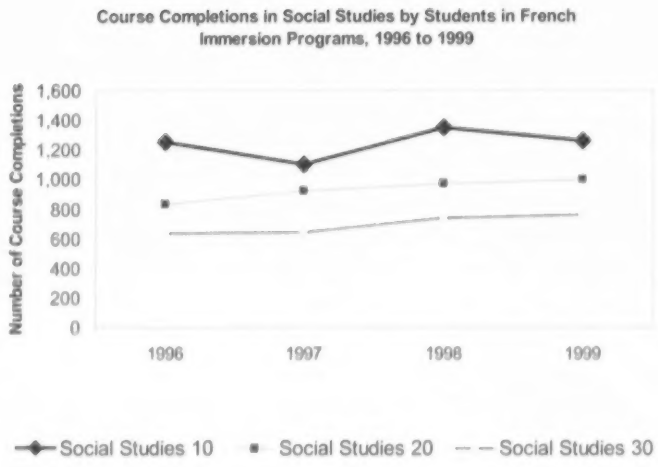


Exhibit 5 Course Completions, Social Studies, 1996–99

see Exhibit 2), the differences are emphasized. If we use 1996 as the baseline of "0", we have a marked drop in enrolment of 2.5% in 1997, a slight improvement in 1998, another drop in 1999 and a slight improvement in 2000. (This is based on actual French immersion numbers. The total number of students in Alberta has gone up substantially during that same time.)

Now, what happens with our retention rate in French immersion? Our highest enrolment consistently (please see Exhibit 3) is always Grade 1 and our lowest enrolment in French immersion is always Grade 12. When we start looking at it, we notice that we are getting a bit of a spread in the Grade 12 retention rate; it is improving. More of those already in the French immersion program are staying until the end of Grade 12. One interesting thing to notice is that we have an enrolment growth at the beginning of secondary school (Grade 7 in Alberta), because of the new students starting late immersion. Then it starts to drop off again. We have a big drop going from Grade 9 into senior high school at Grade 10. In most metropolitan centres these are points where students change schools. Then, if we look at total course completions (please see Exhibit 4) by students in French immersion programs, we see that over the last four years we have a steadily improving situation. Total course completions by students in French immersion programs are rising.

Here is the story in Social Studies: course completions in grades 10, 11 and 12. (Please see Exhibit 5.) Selected science and math course completions (please see Exhibit 6): generally an upward trend in course completions. And then look at the various language arts courses, similar upward trends (please see Exhibit 7). I won't belabour these statistics.

The pass rates for students in French immersion programs are extremely high, close to 100% and consistent, as you know. (Please see Exhibits 20 and 21.)

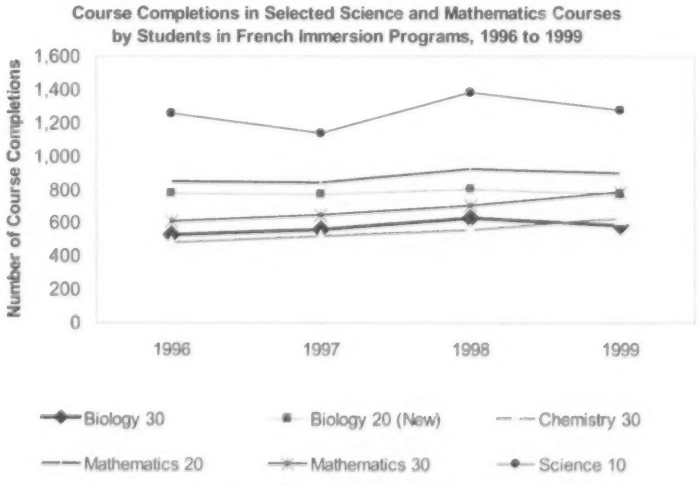


Exhibit 6 Course Completions, Science/Math, 1996–99

Looking at the numbers of high school diplomas awarded to students in French immersion programs (please see Exhibit 8), we again see an increase in the real number over the last four years.

So, although overall immersion trend numbers are a little lower than they were four years ago, within that, the proportion of students who are graduating is increasing.

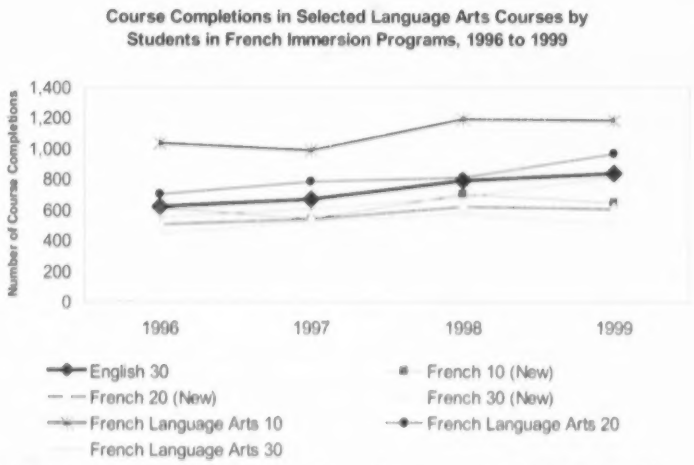


Exhibit 7 Course Completions, Language Arts, 1996–99

I want to talk a little bit now about selected achievement tests. I told you earlier that our participation rate provincially is quite high. Among our French immersion population it is even higher. We are up over the 95% participation rate for Grade 6 Math and Grade 6 Social Studies. (Please see Exhibit 22).

This next chart (please see Exhibit 9) shows how the students have been doing in Grade 3 English Language Arts over time. The French immersion students do just fine. They are obviously not suffering any damage in English Language Arts by being in a French immersion program. I will come back to that in a bit.

Grade 6 English Language Arts (please see Exhibit 10): again the performance of French immersion students is very strong at both the acceptable standard and at the standard of excellence. Is that predictable because of the type of student that goes into immersion? I have some evidence from a new type of analysis (please see Exhibits 11 and 12, which I will cite later). The acceptable standard here was 85% and the standard of excellence was 15%. So if we apply those standards, you can see that the immersion students are doing very well.

For Grade 9 English Language Arts (please see Exhibit 13), you will notice that the gap between the English results and the French immersion results gets wider from Grade 3 to 9. So in Grade 9 we have as close to 100% of the students as you are going to get, meeting the acceptable standard and a marked gap at the standard of excellence, well above the 15% requirement.

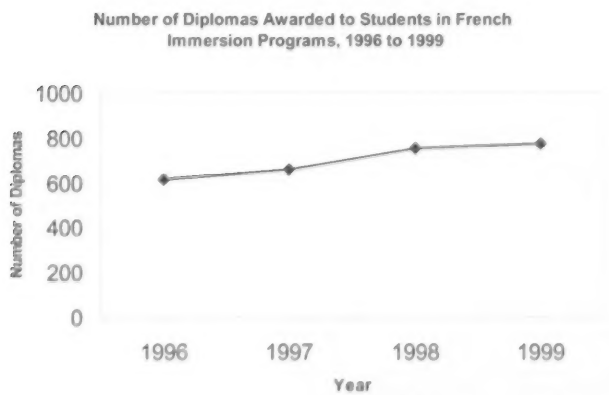


Exhibit 8 Diplomas Awarded to FI Students, 1996–99

In French Language Arts, again results for immersion students are over the 85% mark for

acceptable and right at the 15% mark for the standard of excellence for Grade 9.

To summarize those last few charts in a different way. We have a growing gap in English Language Arts. Here, the immersion results are compared with the overall provincial results for Grade 3, 6 and 9, based on the acceptable standard. At the standard of excellence, immersion and non-immersion results are comparable in Grade 3, and show a marked difference in Grade 9 (please see Exhibits 13 and 22).

In Mathematics (please see Exhibit 14), we see an even stronger trend. In Grade 3 the two groups are pretty well equal. In Grade 6, the immersion students have a clear advantage and by Grade 9, they have a dramatic advantage. That is, when they write in French.

The question is sometimes raised about French translations in Social Studies, but again the children in immersion programs do well in Grade 6 and Grade 9 in Social Studies. (Please see Exhibit 15.) You don't see the marked gap that we saw in some other subjects, but they do well.

It is a similar story in Science (please see Exhibit 16). There is no significant difference at all in Grade 6 and an advantage for the immersion students in Grade 9.

We know immersion students would score higher if they wrote in English, so the fact that they are writing in French and still doing at least as well as the children who write in English is significant. It allows us to tell parents their children are not going to suffer in their performance. They are not being disadvantaged.

What I would like to do now is introduce you to a new way of looking at results. It is a method of analysis that we have recently provided to superintendents around the province. We titled the report "Prior Level of Achievement". I am going to explain, in a nutshell, the methodology. I think you may be able to see some of the advantages of it. We've applied that methodology to French immersion results.

You know that controversy often arises when School A's results are compared with School B's and one is so much higher or lower than the other. The immediate feedback is "Well, what do you expect. It's a richer neighbourhood. So ignore the results." I have been in this business for a few years now and it bothers me that we are dismissing data we should not be. I have wondered for some time if there wasn't a way to get a handle on that. I turned to our psychometric experts for advice and they introduced a methodology using regression analysis.

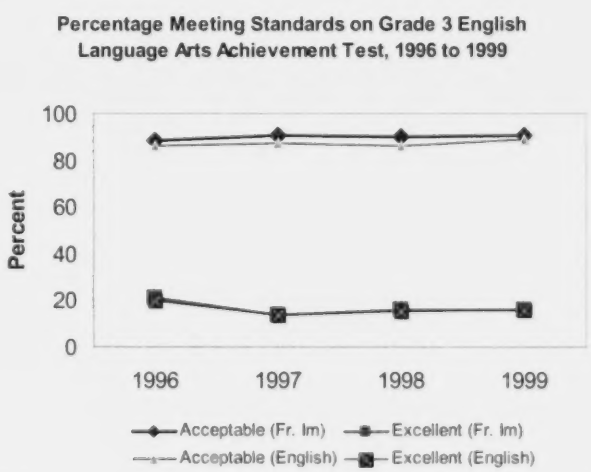


Exhibit 9 Grade 3 ELA Achievement Test, 1996–99

To explain, let's use our earlier case study, Grade 6 Math. We can take the students who wrote Grade 6 Math in your school in 1999, and because our student information system gives every child an identifier or student information number, we can go back three years ago and look at how that particular group of students did, when they wrote the Grade 3 Math achievement test. We went back to their Grade 3 results and from those, we predicted how well they should have done on the Grade 6 Math achievement test.

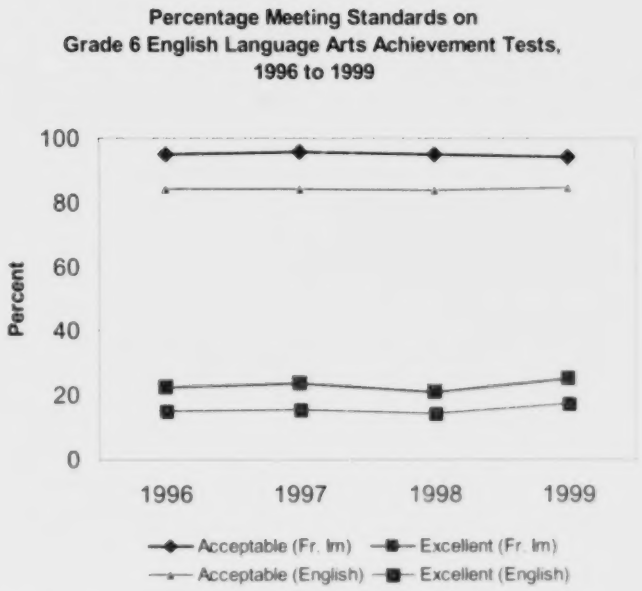


Exhibit 10 Grade 6 ELA Achievement Tests, 1996–99

As an example, if their Grade 3 results were 5% below the provincial average three years ago, then you would expect their result in Grade 6 to be about 5% below the provincial average. I give you this to help you with the concept though it is technically not quite correct—but it is the basic idea. This analysis gets rid of all the noise, or confounding factors, that people point to, because we are talking about the same students. Whatever the socio-economic status or other factors, we are talking about the same students. Now, instead of dismissing the results of school comparisons on the basis of differing backgrounds of the students in each school, we can ask: what has the system, the school, done with the students we've got?

We did some piloting of this methodology a year ago and it seemed very promising. This year we've started using it on a limited basis for public and separate systems. So I thought it would be interesting to take the same methodology and apply it to French immersion. What have we done with the students that we've got in French immersion? Is it just that we get the cream of the crop? Are the consistently higher marks just a selection issue? or a de-selection issue because marginal students leave the program?

Let's focus on Grade 6 English Language Arts written in 1999. (Please see Exhibit 11) According to our student information system, there were 1,800 children who were in French immersion programs in both 1996 and 1999 and wrote both the Grade 3 English Language Arts achievement test in 1996 and the Grade 6 English Language Arts achievement test in 1999. When we looked at their results in 1996 on the Grade 3 test, their average was 70.0%, significantly above the overall provincial average of 68.1%. We also looked at their 1999 results on the Grade 6 test. The immersion students averaged 73.4%, and the provincial average was 68.8%. Again, significantly above the province.

Then we compare their actual performance with their predicted performance. If we go back to the 1996 data and use regression analysis to predict the 1999 results, we find that the average should be 70.0%. This may be the only case of all of our studies where it is the same,

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Average Actual and Predicted Achievement Test Results, Reported as Percentages
Students in a French Immersion Program in Both 1996 and 1999

| Number of FI Students | Actual Grade 3 Results | | Actual Grade 6 Results | | Predicted 1999 Grade 6 Results | Gain Over Predicted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FI | Prov | FI | Prov | FI | |
| 1800 | 70.0 | 68.1 | 73.4 | 68.8 | 70.0 | 3.4 (+) |
| | above province | | above province | | gained more than expected | |

Exhibit 11 Actual and Predicted, Gr 6, ELA, 1996 & 1999

so do not be fooled by that. They actually scored 73.4%. A chi-square test for statistical significance tells us that getting an average score 3.4% higher than predicted is not simply due to chance. The results in Grade 6 are significantly higher than we would have predicted based on the Grade 3 results. So that is an encouraging sign.

We can compare the 1996 Grade 6 results of French immersion students (1,546 students) with their Grade 9 results in English language arts (please see Exhibit 12). The 1996 average was 73.6% and the 1999 was 75.1%. We predicted an average of 72.0% for 1999. The difference was 3.1% and, again, the actual result is significantly higher. There is a greater that expected improvement from Grade 3 to Grade 6 and again from Grade 6 to Grade 9. In the absence of other evidence and other considerations, it appears that students are getting their money's worth out of their French immersion experience.

Grade 9 English Language Arts
**Average Actual and Predicted Achievement Test Results, Reported as Percentages**
Students in a French Immersion Program in Both 1996 and 1999

| Number of FI Students | Actual Grade 6 Results | | Actual Grade 9 Results | | Predicted 1999 Grade 9 Results | Gain Over Predicted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FI | Prov | FI | Prov | FI | |
| 1546 | **73.6** | **68.7** | **75.1** | **68.4** | 72 | **3.1 (+)** |
| | above province | | above province | | gained more than expected | |

Exhibit 12 Actual and Predicted, Gr 9 ELA, 1996 & 1999

I am now going to summarize several of these analyses. In Math, Grade 3 to Grade 6, we have a significant growth, higher that predicted. Math, 6 to 9, the same. We can conclude that in Math (written in French) we are showing gains that are significant and beyond expectation. Earlier I showed you the English Language Arts results. Let's break it down a bit. Late immersion programs allow us to make a different comparison regarding English Language Arts: the effect of learning French on English proficiency. Late immersion students—registered in a French immersion program in 1999, but not registered in French immersion in 1996—wrote ELA

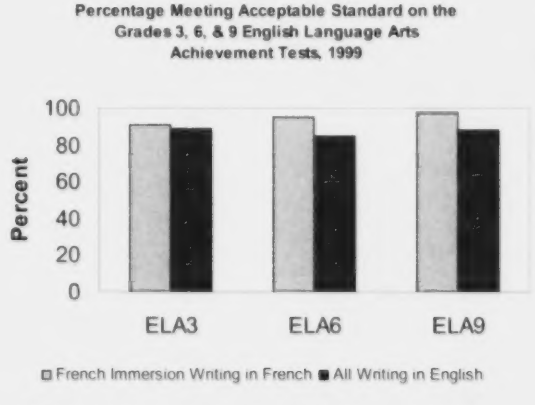


Exhibit 13 ELA Achievement Tests, 1999

achievement tests in 1993 and 1996 as well as 1999. We found that there was no significant difference in English Language Arts between Grade 3 and Grade 6 for these late immersion students, but there was a significant positive difference between Grade 6 and Grade 9. (It should be noted here that the fewer the kids involved, the bigger the difference has to be before it is significantly statistically different.) This suggests that learning French has actually improved their English Language Arts scores.

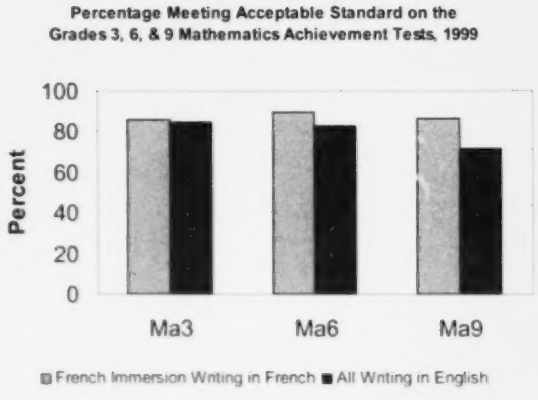


Exhibit 14 Math Achievement Tests, 1999

A similar result comes from a reverse calculation. There are many students who were registered in French immersion three years ago but are no longer in the program. For our purposes in this analysis, they left the immersion program, but are still in Alberta. These students were in French immersion in Grade 3, when they wrote the English Language Arts test but were not in immersion by Grade 6, when they again wrote the English Language Arts test. Even though they left the French immersion program, there have been residual benefits. Between Grade 3 and Grade 6, they have shown an improvement, that is a significant positive difference, of 2.5 %. In the second group, the students were in French immersion in Grade 6 but not by Grade 9. Again, we see a significant improvement.

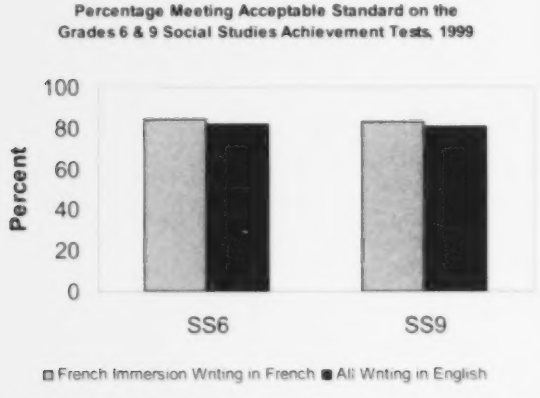


Exhibit 15 Soc. Studies Achievement Tests, 1999

These results do not include students who have come from other provinces, or left to go to other provinces, as we needed to ensure we had the same children at each stage. What have we done with the students in the French immersion program? It appears, quite a lot. It's a different way of looking at the results of the achievement tests.

I want to show you some traditional data on diploma exams and then go to a similar analysis for those exams. In diploma exam results we look at the results for students who write the French translation of a diploma exam. This includes both francophone and immersion students. About 80–90% are immersion

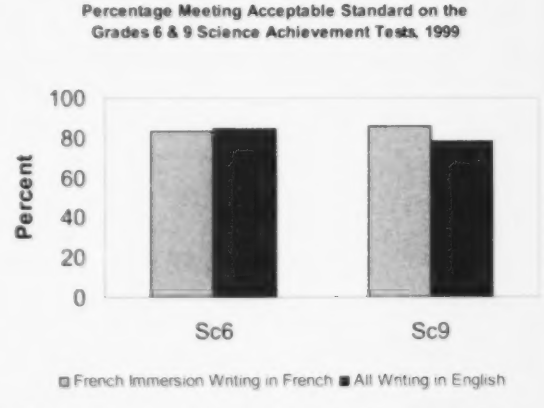


Exhibit 16 Science Achievement Tests, 1999

| | Average Scores | | | Percent Meeting Acceptable Standard | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Actual Written in French | Predicted if Written in English | Actual Written in English | Actual Written in French | Predicted if Written in English | Actual Written in English |
| **1997** | **70.7 *** | **72.9 **** | **67.0** | **97.4 *** | **98.4** | **94.9** |
| **1998** | **71.4 *** | **72.9 **** | **67.3** | **98.2 *** | **99.3 **** | **95.2** |
| **1999** | **68.9 *** | **72.4 **** | **67.8** | **97.6 *** | **99.5 **** | **95.6** |

* Higher than students writing in English

** Significantly different from actual scores

Exhibit 17 Performance of FI Students on Études sociales 30 Compared with their Predicted Scores on the English Version, 1997–1999

students. So these are largely immersion results. On Math 30 (please see Exhibit 19) their results are consistently at least as good as the English results. At the standard of excellence they are somewhat higher. On the Social Studies 30 diploma exams immersion students' results are very much in line with the English students' results. And except for this past year, they were high at the standard of excellence.

Summarizing, we have looked at the evidence in several ways, and it shows that French immersion students are doing very well. They benefit from participation in a French immersion program, not only by learning French but also by enhanced learning in English Language Arts and the content subjects.

| | Average Scores | | | Percent Meeting Acceptable Standard | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Actual Written in English | Predicted if Written in English | Actual Written in English | Actual Written in French | Predicted if Written in English | Actual Written in English |
| **1997** | **67.9 *** | **67.9** | **65.8** | **89.6 *** | **99.3 **** | **88.0** |
| **1998** | **70.4 *** | **71.3** | **67.7** | **92.6 *** | **100.0 **** | **91.1** |
| **1999** | **67.4** | **69.5 **** | **68.1** | **94.7 *** | **99.7 **** | **91.5** |

* Higher than students writing in English

** Significantly different from actual scores

Exhibit 18 Performance of FI Students on Études sociales 30 Compared with their Predicted Scores on the English Version, 1997–1999

Social Studies 30 French Translation and English Version Results
1996 to 1999

| | 1996 | | 1997 | | 1998 | | 1999 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | French | English | French | English | French | English | French | English |
| Number Writing | 402 | 19,566 | 422 | 19,146 | 476 | 19,050 | 624 | 19,472 |
| Mean | 69.4 | 67.3 | 69.7 | 67.0 | 79.9 | 67.3 | 68.6 | 67.8 |
| % Excellent | 28.9 | 18.7 | 24.4 | 17.5 | 26.7 | 18.3 | 18.9 | 19.2 |
| % Acceptable | 90.4 | 94.2 | 96.2 | 94.9 | 98.1 | 95.2 | 97.1 | 95.6 |

Mathematics 30 French Translation and English Version Results
1996 to1999

| | 1996 | | 1997 | | 1998 | | 1999 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | French | English | French | English | French | English | French | English |
| Number Writing | 429 | 18,400 | 414 | 18,062 | 456 | 18,363 | 506 | 19,142 |
| Mean | 69.4 | 65.5 | 69.8 | 65.8 | 71.6 | 67.7 | 70.6 | 68.1 |
| % Excellent | 28.9 | 20.9 | 30.7 | 20.8 | 36.6 | 24.0 | 31.8 | 24.5 |
| % Acceptable | 90.4 | 87.3 | 90.3 | 88.0 | 93.2 | 91.1 | 94.7 | 91.5 |

Predicted Results on Social Studies 30 and Mathematics 30 if Examinations Had Been Written in English Compared With Actual Results on French Translations

| | Average Scores | | | | Percent Meeting Standards | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | % Acceptable | | | | % Excellence | | | |
| | Actual | Predicted | Diff | 95% CI | Actual | Predicted | Diff | Chisq | Actual | Predicted | Diff | Chisq |
| Social Studies 30 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1997 | 70.7 | 72.9 | 2.23 | (1.49, 2.98) | 97.4 | 98.4 | 1.0 | = | 25.5 | 26.5 | 1.0 | = |
| 1998 | 71.4 | 72.9 | 1.55 | (0.88, 2.23) | 98.2 | 99.3 | 1.1 | - | 27.7 | 25.2 | -2.5 | = |
| 1999 | 68.9 | 72.4 | 3.42 | (2.74, 4.01) | 97.6 | 99.5 | 1.9 | - | 19.7 | 21.0 | 1.3 | = |
| Mathematics 30 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1997 | 67.9 | 67.9 | 0.02 | (-1.35, 1.39) | 89.6 | 99.3 | 9.7 | - | 25.7 | 2.4 | -23.3 | + |
| 1998 | 70.4 | 71.3 | 0.93 | (-0.40, 2.27) | 92.6 | 100.0 | 7.4 | - | 29.9 | 7.1 | -22.8 | + |
| 1999 | 67.4 | 69.5 | 2.14 | (0.89, 3.39) | 94.7 | 99.7 | 5.0 | - | 19.9 | 6.2 | -13.7 | + |

Exhibit 19 Diploma Examination Results, 1996–1999

## Course Completions and Pass Rate of French Immersion Students in Selected High School Courses 1996 to 1999

| Course | 1996 Course Completions | 1996 Pass Rate (%) | 1997 Course Completions | 1997 Pass Rate (%) | 1998 Course Completions | 1998 Pass Rate (%) | 1999 Course Completions | 1999 Pass Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Applied Sociology 30 | | | 1 | 100.0 | | | 1 | 100.0 |
| Biology 15 (IB) | 15 | 100.0 | 1 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 12 | 100.0 |
| Biology 20 (New) | 780 | 95.7 | 779 | 95.7 | 807 | 95.3 | 774 | 95.2 |
| Biology 25 (IB) | 7 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 7 | 100.0 | 5 | 100.0 |
| Biology 30 | 547 | 98.7 | 577 | 100.0 | 656 | 99.0 | 600 | 99.8 |
| Biology 35 (AP) | . | | | | 6 | 100.0 | 17 | 100.0 |
| Chemistry 20 (New) | 718 | 94.5 | 807 | 94.1 | 873 | 94.1 | 836 | 95.8 |
| Chemistry 25 (IB) | 31 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | 18 | 100.0 | 35 | 100.0 |
| Chemistry 30 | 507 | 100.0 | 539 | 97.5 | 568 | 100.0 | 650 | 99.2 |
| Chemistry 35 (AP) | | | | | | | 1 | 100.0 |
| Chemistry 35 (IB) | 23 | 100.0 | 25 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 25 | 100.0 |
| English 10 | 1249 | 96.9 | 1115 | 96.3 | 1325 | 96.7 | 1225 | 98.0 |
| English 13 | 41 | 85.0 | 45 | 93.3 | 78 | 89.6 | 48 | 97.9 |
| English 16 | 1 | 100.0 | | | 1 | 100.0 | | |
| English 20 | 841 | 97.5 | 945 | 97.2 | 988 | 96.6 | 1002 | 98.0 |
| English 23 | 47 | 91.1 | 40 | 92.5 | 50 | 98.0 | 38 | 97.4 |
| English 26 | 1 | 100.0 | | | 1 | 100.0 | | |
| English 30 | 622 | 100.0 | 675 | 100.0 | 802 | 100.0 | 851 | 100.0 |
| English 33 | 34 | 97.1 | 33 | 100.0 | 35 | 97.1 | 31 | 100.0 |
| English 35 (IB) | 17 | 100.0 | 26 | 100.0 | 27 | 100.0 | 37 | 100.0 |
| English SL 10 | | | | | | | 2 | 100.0 |
| English SL 10 | | | | | | | 2 | 100.0 |
| English SL 10A | | | 1 | 100.0 | | | | |
| English SL 10C | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Francais 10 | 25 | 100.0 | 7 | 100.0 | 12 | 91.7 | 8 | 87.5 |
| Francais 13 | 3 | 100.0 | | | 2 | 100.0 | 4 | 25.0 |
| Francais 20 | 23 | 100.0 | 9 | 100.0 | 4 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 |
| Francais 23 | | | 2 | 100.0 | | | 1 | 100.0 |
| Francais 30 | 1 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 6 | 100.0 | 5 | 100.0 |
| Francais 33 | | | 2 | 100.0 | 2 | 100.0 | 1 | |
| French 10 | 2 | 100.0 | 1 | 100.0 | | | | |
| French 10 (New) | 609 | 100.0 | 540 | 100.0 | 705 | 100.0 | 646 | 100.0 |
| French 10N (9 Year) | 4 | 50.0 | | | | | | |
| French 20 | 6 | 100.0 | 9 | 100.0 | 2 | 100.0 | | |
| French 20 (New) | 507 | 100.0 | 537 | 100.0 | 619 | 100.0 | 608 | 100.0 |
| French 20N (9 Year) | 3 | 100.0 | | | | | | |
| French 30 | 130 | 100.0 | 1 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 24 | 100.0 |
| French 30 (New) | 450 | 101.1 | 525 | 100.0 | 573 | 100.0 | 504 | 100.0 |
| French 30N (9 Year) | 10 | 90.0 | | | | | | |
| French 31A | 49 | 98.0 | 27 | 96.3 | 36 | 94.4 | 15 | 93.3 |
| French 31B | 11 | 100.0 | 12 | 83.3 | 5 | 100.0 | 1 | 100.0 |
| French 31C | 4 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 3 | 100.0 | 9 | 100.0 |
| French Language Arts 10 | 1031 | 96.5 | 985 | 97.4 | 1191 | 96.6 | 1184 | 98.1 |

Exhibit 20 Course Completions and Pass Rates, 1996–99

## Course Completions and Pass Rate of French Immersion Students in Selected High School Courses1996 to 1999, continued

| Course | 1996 Course Completions | 1996 Pass Rate (%) | 1997 Course Completions | 1997 Pass Rate (%) | 1998 Course Completions | 1998 Pass Rate (%) | 1999 Course Completions | 1999 Pass Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| French Language Arts 20 | 698 | 98.9 | 783 | 97.1 | 807 | 96.5 | 965 | 96.5 |
| French Language Arts 30 | 549 | 99.1 | 603 | 99.2 | 682 | 98.5 | 816 | 98.3 |
| Mathematics 10 | 1237 | 93.3 | 1086 | 92.8 | 1310 | 91.7 | 550 | 90.0 |
| Mathematics 13 | 144 | 86.0 | 155 | 89.0 | 233 | 89.5 | 110 | 87.9 |
| Mathematics 14 (Formerly 15) | 8 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | 17 | 100.0 | 19 | 94.7 |
| Mathematics 16 | | | | | 2 | 50.0 | 1 | 100.0 |
| Mathematics 20 | 883 | 95.5 | 869 | 93.0 | 1028 | 92.4 | 1003 | 93.8 |
| Mathematics 23 | 129 | 89.4 | 155 | 84.9 | 164 | 88.2 | 160 | 91.0 |
| Mathematics 24 (Formerly 25) | 7 | 100.0 | 8 | 62.5 | 14 | 100.0 | 7 | 100.0 |
| Mathematics 30 | 675 | 100.0 | 715 | 100.0 | 758 | 100.0 | 845 | 100.9 |
| Mathematics 31 | 250 | 93.5 | 226 | 92.9 | 277 | 96.0 | 324 | 93.4 |
| Mathematics 33 | 84 | 94.0 | 84 | 87.8 | 117 | 86.1 | 89 | 90.7 |
| Mathematics 35 (AP) | | | | | 3 | 100.0 | 7 | 100.0 |
| Mathematics Prep 10 | | | | | | | 39 | 92.3 |
| Physics 15 (IB) | | | | | 7 | 85.7 | 9 | 88.9 |
| Physics 20 (New) | 464 | 95.0 | 495 | 92.9 | 604 | 95.2 | 570 | 95.4 |
| Physics 30 | 248 | 98.8 | 277 | 97.8 | 347 | 98.8 | 352 | 99.4 |
| Pure Mathematics 10 | | | | | | | 667 | 92.2 |
| Pure Mathematics 20 | | | | | | | 3 | 100.0 |
| Science 10 | 1268 | 95.6 | 1147 | 94.2 | 1396 | 95.4 | 1285 | 96.9 |
| Science 14 | 34 | 100.0 | 30 | 93.3 | 39 | 94.7 | 29 | 86.2 |
| Science 15 | 44 | 95.5 | 33 | 97.0 | 65 | 98.5 | | |
| Science 16 | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Science 20 | 22 | 77.3 | 25 | 100.0 | 24 | 91.7 | 39 | 89.7 |
| Science 24 | 18 | 94.4 | 25 | 96.0 | 21 | 95.2 | 19 | 94.7 |
| Science 30 | 9 | 100.0 | 20 | 95.0 | 7 | 100.0 | 32 | 96.9 |
| Sciences pratiques 15 | | | | | | | 49 | 100.0 |
| Social Studies 10 | 1254 | 96.2 | 1106 | 96.3 | 1347 | 97.3 | 1258 | 97.4 |
| Social Studies 13 | 32 | 90.6 | 34 | 94.1 | 50 | 92.0 | 10 | 90.0 |
| Social Studies 20 | 832 | 97.6 | 926 | 97.0 | 973 | 96.4 | 998 | 97.7 |
| Social Studies 23 | 33 | 90.9 | 37 | 97.2 | 48 | 95.8 | 26 | 100.0 |
| Social Studies 26 | 1 | 100.0 | | | | | | |
| Social Studies 30 | 650 | 97.2 | 654 | 98.6 | 759 | 99.3 | 782 | 100.1 |
| Social Studies 33 | 27 | 96.3 | 47 | 95.7 | 80 | 100.0 | 66 | 96.9 |

Exhibit 21 Course Completions and Pass Rates, 1996–99, continued

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards on Selected Achievement Tests
1996 to 1999

| | French Immersion (Wrote in French) | | | | Non-French Immersion (Wrote in English) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
| Grade 3 Mathematics | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 99.2 | 98.0 | 97.4 | 99.5 | 95.3 | 94.8 | 93.2 | 94.1 |
| Excellent | 14.9 | 18.5 | 20.4 | 22.5 | 18.9 | 21.1 | 20.8 | 25.4 |
| Acceptable | 89.5 | 91.7 | 81.9 | 85.6 | 90.9 | 92.6 | 80.4 | 84.7 |
| Grade 3 English Language Arts | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 98.6 | 98.6 | 96.9 | 98.9 | 94.0 | 94.1 | 93.3 | 94.1 |
| Excellent | 21.0 | 13.5 | 16.0 | 15.9 | 19.8 | 13.6 | 15.2 | 15.8 |
| Acceptable | 88.3 | 90.3 | 89.9 | 90.5 | 86.0 | 87.2 | 86.0 | 88.7 |
| Grade 6 Mathematics | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 99.3 | 98.8 | 95.7 | 96.5 | 94.9 | 94.8 | 94.0 | 92.9 |
| Excellent | 26.2 | 33.6 | 32.5 | 23.1 | 23.6 | 24.9 | 15.9 | 16.9 |
| Acceptable | 91.7 | 95.1 | 96.4 | 89.7 | 85.8 | 88.2 | 81.2 | 82.8 |
| Grade 6 English Language Arts | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 98.2 | 98.6 | 98.6 | 96.3 | 93.7 | 94.3 | 93.5 | 93.1 |
| Excellent | 22.5 | 23.7 | 20.7 | 25.1 | 15.2 | 15.5 | 14.4 | 17.4 |
| Acceptable | 95.0 | 95.7 | 95.0 | 94.0 | 84.3 | 84.2 | 83.8 | 84.4 |
| Grade 6 Social Studies | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 99.4 | 98.9 | 98.8 | 96.6 | 94.6 | 94.3 | 93.4 | 96.4 |
| Excellent | 8.6 | 12.5 | 11.1 | 14.5 | 15.8 | 16.9 | 16.9 | 17.5 |
| Acceptable | 72.9 | 80.8 | 77.2 | 84.3 | 77.6 | 77.9 | 78.0 | 81.7 |
| Grade 9 Mathematics | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 96.9 | 99.1 | 98.6 | 94.4 | 91.7 | 91.3 | 88.9 | 88.6 |
| Excellent | 19.4 | 23.4 | 23.8 | 15.4 | 14.0 | 11.9 | 13.8 | 15.2 |
| Acceptable | 87.7 | 85.4 | 89.9 | 86.2 | 69.5 | 67.1 | 71.0 | 71.6 |
| Grade 9 English Language Arts | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 96.5 | 98.6 | 98.7 | 98.5 | 90.9 | 91.2 | 89.3 | 89.7 |
| Excellent | 24.1 | 22.1 | 23.2 | 23.3 | 11.4 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 12.1 |
| Acceptable | 98.8 | 98.7 | 98.2 | 97.6 | 88.2 | 86.9 | 87.4 | 87.6 |
| Grade 9 Science | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 96.3 | 99.0 | 98.6 | 98.6 | 92.0 | 91.6 | 89.5 | 89.7 |
| Excellent | 21.5 | 14.0 | 13.9 | 14.7 | 18.1 | 15.4 | 12.8 | 14.8 |
| Acceptable | 89.4 | 83.8 | 85.7 | 85.5 | 80.9 | 78.4 | 78.3 | 78.1 |
| Grade 9 Social Studies | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 96.4 | 99.0 | 98.8 | 98.9 | 91.7 | 91.6 | 89.0 | 89.8 |
| Excellent | 12.6 | 14.0 | 17.3 | 17.3 | 15.2 | 15.4 | 13.9 | 17.8 |
| Acceptable | 84.4 | 83.8 | 89.1 | 83.2 | 79.4 | 81.3 | 78.4 | 80.4 |

Exhibit 22 Students Meeting Standards on Selected Achievement Tests, 1996–99

# Appendix D

- Callaghan, Brian, Judy Grigat, and Rick St. Arnaud. **"Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Kobasiuk, Phyllis, Brian Mitchell, and Joanne Fiest. **"Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Canadian Parents for French. ***CPF School Self-Assessment Tool for French-Second-Language Education Programs.*** Ottawa: Canadian Parents for French, 2001. Reprinted with permission.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator

**Brian Callaghan**

Most of my career has been spent within a multilingual/political context.

Growing up in Quebec, I learned that language is not just about communication, it is about other issues as well. When I first went into the arctic, around the time of the signing of the James Bay agreement, language was an issue with the Aboriginal people who were primarily James Bay Cree and Inuit. The provincial government, at that time, had its language policies in place to assimilate either culture. On entering Grade 3, parents had to choose between English or French as the language of instruction for the remainder of their child's time in school. For Kindergarten, and grades 1 and 2, instruction had been in their mother tongue, either Cree or Inuktitut.

My role as a teacher and as a school principal has always been in a trilingual context. Seeking peace and harmony within the staff and within the community is another social/political goal.

Even when I moved to Northern Alberta, where I joined the Northlands School Division, aboriginal languages continued to be an issue. From the elders' point of view the Cree language was under severe threat of becoming either unique or extinct. We developed programs and curriculum, and worked strenuously to provide materials, through the department of education as well as private sponsors, so that the various aboriginal groups could continue to maintain an aboriginal curriculum and language. To my knowledge, the Northlands School Division still teaches the Cree language. The core curriculum is delivered in an immersion model.

When I joined Mount Rundle School Division in 1990, a significant element of the community wanted to continue to implement French immersion beyond Kindergarten and Grade 3. The trustees realized that there was a set of issues that were already beginning to gel. They realized that continued implementation was a complex affair. When recruiting a superintendent, they specifically looked for someone sympathetic to languages, not necessarily someone who was bilingual. They wanted someone who would support language program development. They made this a point in developing their hiring profile.

Until then, they probably had one of the most minimal French-as-a-second-language programs running in any jurisdiction of the province. Canmore was a coal mining town with a strong English base. Immigrants who came to work the coal mines learned English rather than any other language. French was seen as a language that came from the east and that meant politics. The first challenge we faced was to create an environment that de-politicized the issue. We went through many different sub-committee, community-based meetings to start to build an acceptance of bringing in new languages. We discussed languages other than French. We realized that we had to be prepared to offer the community some compromises that would leave us in a situation where we didn't have just immersion and then FSL [core French] programs starting in late elementary or

junior high. The parents wanted me to recommend that we begin our FSL program at Grade 1, but there was a feeling that French immersion would be too much at risk in the beginning if there were too much choice. Accordingly, we held our FSL program at the Grade 4 level until the immersion program had expanded to cover Kindergarten to Grade 3. Only then did we implement an FSL program that started in Grade 1. We had to be flexible. To date, we have immersion from Kindergarten to Grade 10, and FSL starting in Grade 1.

We also realized that there was going to be a pupil-teacher ratio differential between the two language programs. We had to be prepared to face the equity issue: the French classes would always be smaller than the English classes. In the beginning, it is fair to say that the trustees stood their political ground, taking the pressure off the class differential evident in the first few years of immersion implementation.

In an effort to keep the trustees open to the immersion concept we provided what we thought was a major accomplishment, a trustee in-service. We wanted them to listen to what are, perhaps in many jurisdictions, minority presentations. The intent of the in-service was to sensitize the trustees to, and accept, the fact that there would be opposing political pressures if they spent funds in such areas as a French library and resources materials. We felt that if they could, through these in-service sessions and seminars, develop a neutrality, the hostility would vanish, and they would be willing to at least listen without bias. We felt it to be a significant accomplishment.

The chairman of the school board, in the role of a father of six children, was not overly sympathetic to the French immersion program. However, over time he changed his mind. He came to realize that these French immersion students could accomplish a considerable amount. He enrolled his son in the immersion program. As a unilingual Albertan, he was stunned that his son could go into a classroom of six-year-olds, the teacher speaking only in French, and, with their limited vocabulary, the children could understand the instructions and interact with each other. His son would come home and ask his father things in French. He would have French words and he would ask his father the English word. Gaining the support of the board chair was very important. Watching the father's joy in his son's accomplishment was something to behold. Over a period of time, all trustees developed an openness on the subject of immersion.

Politically, we were very conscious of the fact that the trustees controlled the final decision. We worked to have them listen and feel comfortable with the notion of experimentation. We started out, as I think they have in many jurisdictions, from information we received at many conferences for parents of French immersion students. As in all things, reliable information related to student performance was critical. Regrettably, not all of the factors relating to decisions regarding immersion remain constant. Over the years we've suffered the reduction of federal grants. All of the promises made to parents of fifty students a year, so we could have two sections per grade or more, have failed to meet expectations. We are now faced with split classes and are wondering how we can offer credit courses with small student numbers at the high school level. Once again we need to be flexible, especially at the upper high school end. We've gone into locally approved courses in French culture and literature. We have done everything from French Social Studies to special projects. We've really tried to entice teenagers who, by the time they are in high school, will negotiate the decisions that affect them. Up to that point—from the first years of their life right up until about junior high—they have had most of their decisions made by their parents. But in high school, their peers draw them to new things and away from things like immersion. The high school

curriculum, at this point, really starts to bear down on them academically. My own daughters, who have been in French immersion since kindergarten, felt tremendous pressure carrying on with language arts in two languages, when their classmates would have "soft" options. So, we are constantly challenged by how to create an environment for French immersion students where the reward for competency is worth the work put in to achieve it. To the student, immersion is similar to what we often do for gifted students: "You're gifted, do a bigger paper."

We've also worked very hard with our parents. The degree of interaction we have with French immersion parents is far greater than I would expect to have with most parents. French immersion parents, perhaps because they are worried or overly concerned or overly interested or maybe all of the above, want more time with the system and the teachers; they want more time to talk about the future of French immersion. They are constantly asking me at information sessions: "What happens when my child gets to high school?" or "I've heard this report about science marks going in the tank." They really listen to all the myths and stories. To counter this we need to be prepared to present factual information on those issues. We also need to work with national associations that are tracking student performance issues and disproving myths. I accept most research findings at face value, like the performance results of immersion students in sciences at the senior high level. Furthermore, we must realize that as educators we are often working against peer group pressure and the pressure of the curriculum. We also have the situation where some students, who have been in immersion from Kindergarten to Grade 9, simply challenge the French 10, 20, and 30 exams, often with great success. This then sets them up in Grade 10 with 15 credits. They think that this is their reward.

We have worked very closely with CPF, both with our local chapter and at the provincial level. Their work in the community to support second language programs has resulted in a number of scholarships, support for second language professional development, and material acquisition. In looking to the future of immersion programs, it is fundamental that we talk about financial supports. The grant for French immersion students has been declining. We have found ourselves challenged to keep up with the cost of French immersion materials, whether they be structural materials or library materials. Our CPF local chapter and our parents save the day, quite honestly, by the virtue of the time they put into fundraising. The money they contribute to our adopt-a-book programs for the library or things that tack on to an already over-extended budget is invaluable. These parents have been willing to pay the extra costs. It is difficult to build a long-term program when you're only as good as your last bake sale.

I feel that there has been a decreasing interest at both the federal and the provincial levels, to recognize the long-term sustained financing required to make these programs viable. They speak the rhetoric, but fail to deliver the financial resources. The other factors that happen between peers and between families tell a disappointing tale. I don't think my enrolment statistics are really anything out of the ordinary compared to national or provincial trends in immersion. Fifty percent of my enrolment at the elementary level is in immersion. If you look at my Kindergarten classes, half are English, the other half, French immersion. But by the time we get to high school, immersion is only ten percent of enrolment. So over those nine years we see a serious decline.

Also, we have some unsympathetic English teachers who have complained that students who leave French immersion programs and enter English are now in some way special education students: students who require extra resources. We are also accused of only taking the elite

students into immersion, but I have evaluated students in immersion who struggle just to pass, acquiring a language along the way. So there are other benefits that are not really given an equal acknowledgment by professional staff.

These are some of the issues that we have faced and I'm sure that they've been repeated around the province. We have had some very hostile meetings in our community with people, whose reasons for coming are probably deeply personal, coming to French immersion meetings to espouse the unilingual point of view. They are almost paranoid, feeling the threat of languages they do not understand; using the cover of a candid debate, they refer to the B and B Commission, or something Trudeau did when he was a teenager. I've heard the most ridiculous statements and observed irrational behaviors at public meetings. To avoid such outbursts, the board has implemented a very deliberate strategy. It has refused to hold such meetings during the last five or six years. The Board receives input via a Languages Program Committee made up of teachers of both languages, parents and central office staff. Nevertheless, one must have a thick skin, if we're doing this.

Now we must look to the future of French immersion. I'm getting the sad feeling that the novelty or the fad is wearing thin for some. It takes a long-term commitment; it takes multiple generations of support as children go through the system, decades and decades. We now have some students who have gone through the system, and they are very proficient in the language. I'm worried that in the culture of this small, English speaking town in Alberta, where you have to negotiate with your cable provider to get French cable to come in, where everything is a challenge or a hurdle or an extra financial commitment, that there will not be the determination to carry on. There have been many changes in Alberta society in the last decade, and sometimes people just don't want this to be one more. "Let's go back to the regular program. We won't have all of these worries," they say. So then it becomes a war of attrition.

I have no doubt in my mind that the teachers we have are among our best teachers; they're competent; they're fluent. The thing that antagonizes some Anglophone teachers, is that French immersion teachers tend to be passionate. They are selling a language, they're selling a culture, they have a fervor. Some of my French immersion teachers will work all sorts of extra hours with their students and plan field trips. And English teachers say, "Hey, you're making me look bad." I've got a situation right now. The English teachers in junior high are critical of their colleagues who took a group to Quebec last year. "What about us?" And I say, "Well, why don't you go to London, England?" All kidding aside, these are real tensions.

In a small English speaking community, those English teachers talk to their neighbours and pass along their bias. So regrettably these are things that you have to work with. I'm not so sure how you overcome this colleague-to-colleague tension. Immersion is a bonafide program but yet some English teachers are concerned for their own jobs. That is something that you have to be aware of, if you are going to take this issue on. Some of my staff think of immersion as a loss of English jobs. In their minds, where the superintendents used to hire English teachers for Grade 1 they now hire immersion teachers. In my mind they're all teachers. They all belong to the ATA. There are undercurrent issues related to professionalism in this area.

Where do we go with government? We need to continue to remind them that the program needs support and improvements, and that this will require extraordinary funding. If you are going

to put an elementary library in a French immersion school, there will be extra costs. Some of us are fortunate, because we have contacts back East who have access to French language software at reasonable prices. We buy through a school board, through friends from the old days so to speak. But once again, what I'm saying is that you have to have a survival mentality to get the basics for an immersion program, like picking up a catalogue and finding materials at a fair price. We must also encourage Anglophone parents to buy French books for the home library to encourage literacy—at two or three times the price of English books. These are the challenges that our current funding structure fails to acknowledge. We need to constantly remind government that what we are doing with immersion programs will pay off for the students and the province of Alberta.

In concluding, I think that is about as much as I have to share with you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator

JUDY GRIGAT

I'd like to start by describing Grande-Yellowhead Regional Division. We are scattered along Highway 16, from about a hundred kilometres west of Edmonton to the B.C. border, then north to Grande Cache, about an hour and a half north of Hinton, and then south to Robb.

Within our district, the distance, the diverse nature, and the population of the various urban centres present some challenges. We have schools with enrolments of only 14 pupils, schools as large as 815 pupils, and every size in between. We have Kindergarten to Grade 4 schools, Kindergarten to Grade 5, Kindergarten to Grade 6, and so on. The diversity of schools really does present a challenge. We have two fairly large urban centres: Hinton is a city of ten thousand, Edson serves an area of about the same size, although it is spread out a bit more. Then we have smaller towns with between 500 and 900 students, and then there are the rural areas.

Within our system, we offer French immersion in the two larger centres: Hinton and Edson. The very fact that we offer immersion in a geographic region like ours presents challenges, because communities outside of Hinton and Edson see it, and they want it, too. A town the size of Hinton or Edson can easily sustain a program, but a town the size of Grande Cache, which has a student population of about 900 or 1,000, could sustain an alternate program. However, our experience has been very negative in these communities. They tend to tear themselves apart, becoming very political and very emotional. It puts us, as district administrators, in a difficult situation. We have the French immersion people saying: "We like this. Help us. Don't you support this?" and we have to say, "Yes, of course we do." And we have English program parents saying, "Don't let them do that, it will destroy our school, it will destroy our programs. Don't you support our schools?" So we have to walk a fine line.

Two examples with smaller centres: Evansburg and Jasper. Evansburg attempted to establish a program, and I wouldn't want to go through that kind of situation again. Jasper has as well, and that situation is very similar to what Brian Callaghan just described. They had no French education at all and the compromise was the implementation of a solid core French program. In Jasper right now, the CPF chapter has reactivated and there is another push to establish French immersion.

So that is the challenge we face as a diverse geographic area. I think we had our eyes closed to that challenge when we implemented programs initially. I shouldn't even say "we", because at that time I was at the school level. I was the parent of a child who was about to enter school, and I was determined that there would be French language instruction for my child. It didn't matter what the obstacles were; as a parent, I wanted it. As a school-based administrator in a large school at the time, I knew we could sustain it.

But as you walk down that path to establish French immersion programs, other issues crop up, things you never even considered as problems. There is an example within the two centres where we have several schools. In Hinton, there is a competition for students, because we have three Kindergarten to Grade 7 schools. This presents some interesting obstacles. The system offers French immersion in one of the three schools. The school that offers it feels that French immersion should be offered to every parent of every child who registers in our system. But the two schools that don't have immersion are reluctant to tell new parents about it for fear of losing their own enrolments. So the only enrolment in French immersion after Kindergarten/Grade 1 is quite limited, generally restricted to families who reside in the attendance area of the school offering the program, and that's a real disadvantage to the community as a whole.

Some of the experiences Brian mentioned about moving to the next level are similar to ours, too. Because we have three Kindergarten to Grade 7 schools in one community, all the students then go to a grades 8 to12 high school. Initially, as the immersion students moved up into grades 5, 6 and 7, the high school started to panic. This situation was in the growth days. We started out with a small class, then we doubled its size. The numbers were big. I'm sure that many English program teachers saw themselves being laid off or being sent to Quebec to have to learn French. The negative publicity was a significant factor in why our enrolment has dropped; we know that.

After the immersion students moved into the school, we talked to English program parents. Once they realized that teachers weren't losing their jobs nor were they being sent to Quebec nor to France nor to Hell, the parents calmed down. The group of English program parents who were influential then began to ask for a late or middle immersion program. But we are not big enough to sustain all those entry points. We did allow a few students to enter the program in later grades to accommodate the wishes of a few parents who had just been scared to death initially by talking to other staff who were fearful and who were spreading that fear.

In Edson we have four elementary schools, a junior high school and a high school, and that has presented a challenge for us. The program in Edson is too scattered, across three schools. At the elementary schools, immersion students make up about half of the population. In the junior high school they are about one-fifth or one-sixth of the school population. In high school, they are just a tiny little drop in the bucket. So, as students move into high school, it becomes a real challenge for us to offer a program that provides a sufficient percentage of instruction in French. The best we are able to do is offer a maintenance program, so that their French does not deteriorate.

Our administrators are wonderful in the way they put programs together. Brian Callaghan was talking about providing some soft options. We've done that sort of thing. We've done a lot of combining courses, and we're fortunate that our teachers haven't been scared off, at least not so far. We offer humanities as a full-year course giving the students ten credits per year.

We look for teachers who are bilingual enough to teach in French, and while we haven't been wildly successful, these last two years have been much better. When we can hire a bilingual teacher to teach a subject, such as physics, in either English or French, we do. That way, when the immersion students get to high school and they want physics in French, we can offer it. We are starting to do that more and more. Last year, we had seventeen or eighteen French immersion

students enrolled in a class that included Math 10/20/30 and Math 13/23/33. The students got a good math program, but that kind of combination takes a very special teacher.

Another key factor for supporting French immersion programs is ensuring that there is support at the central office level. You are here, so your districts would seem to have that level of support already, but I know that in many systems there are programs handled solely by the principal, with little or no knowledge at the central administration level. We had that problem in our system at one time. For example, before 1983, school administrators had an idea that there was money for French immersion, but there was little support for, encouragement for, or interest in, the French immersion program at the system level. All of the French program grants at that time just went into general revenue. This was distributed to schools, but not identified specifically for use in French immersion. When I moved into central administration in 1983, I began to find out exactly what was available to support French immersion. So I encouraged our principals to become politically active, and since then we have put all the money that the French programs have generated by French language instruction grants into one pot, to be used specifically for French language programming. This move has been very positive for our programs.

Prior to the change in funding framework, it was easy to raise taxes. At a quarter of a mil increase in the tax rate, with our tax base we could have almost anything we wanted. So transportation was no problem, low enrolments were no problem, aides in the early grades were no problem. Unfortunately, with the change in the way education was funded from the provincial level, all that disappeared. Fortunately, the French grants have helped us maintain vitality in our programs. Our principals have always done the planning for the use of the funds and, as we moved more towards site-based decision-making, have agreed to keep our grants central. This agreement has been positive for our system; when new principals come in, they can't take us off in different directions, because we have a set of principles under which that grant is administered.

We have always said our primary focus will be the promotion of French language learning, period. Not French immersion language learning, but French language learning. Because core French does generate some of the federal grant money and it is all in the pot, if there is a time when we need to take care of core French, we do. That keeps the rest of our principals satisfied, too. We also said that the whole program has to be maintained. A strong program at the Kindergarten level is equally as important as a strong program at the high school level. For the benefit of everybody, we make decisions based on those principles.

Our principals work very well together; they are wonderful. The elementary schools that generate most of the money—because that is where most of the students are—will comment: "We know we generate all this. We could take our money and run, but it does us no good in terms of attracting enrolment if there isn't a secondary program." So out of that pool of money, they have done things to support the high schools. We want to keep politics out of budgeting as much as possible, so we don't want to take away from what is available for the English program. We use the French grants to ensure that doesn't happen. For example, we have always been able to pay for program expansion through expansion and development grants. And rather than making the school come up with the matching dollars, which we'd have to take out of English funding, making lots of people mad, we have taken it out of the French grant. If the students don't generate enough income in the school because the numbers are too small, we have taken that extra .3 or .5 teacher cost out

of the French grant. We are sure we always have enough credits offered to enable our students to earn a bilingual diploma.

One of the things we haven't done as much as we could have is to use our parents and specifically CPF. It isn't because we don't want to, but because of instability within the parent groups themselves. The initial CPF group that had to encourage the board to offer the program—and initially our program was only approved from Kindergarten to Grade 6, by the way—was the same group that had to encourage our board to offer a secondary program. By the time they had done all that encouraging, they were pretty tired. So there was a lull for a time. We now have a new group of parents who are looking for ways to enhance the program for the children. As they have become part of the group that meets to plan for the expenditures, they are saying. "Don't spend your money on that, we'll do that for you." So that's very positive for us.

Like Brian Callaghan, I think that one of the best supports I can offer to the program is that my children have been through it. Certainly I have to walk a very careful path, because I was their school principal when my children were in the program, but I can talk about French immersion both pedagogically and in parent language. Sometimes, when it is your child experiencing difficulties, your parental anxiety tends to throw pedagogy out the window.

One of the things I do now is to encourage the immersion schools, whenever they have an opening, to advertise for bilingual staff, so they're positioned to offer whatever might come about. If you are replacing your secretary, why not look for a bilingual secretary? That has been successful to varying degrees at different times.

But overall, I think pooling money to support the total program has been what has saved our programs to the greatest extent. It has kept them vibrant and healthy. Well, actually I have to touch wood and cross everything I can cross; we went through a slump just as the province did. Our enrolments followed the enrolments in the province. This year we are peaking, and we see that the interest is stronger right now for next year's programs than it has been in a long time. So I think we are starting to climb again, and that is a very encouraging sign because we've come through some difficult years of lower Kindergarten/Grade 1 enrolments.

And I'll stop there.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the Senior District Administrator

**Rick St. Arnaud**

I am a product of the Edmonton Catholic School system. I was raised in Falher, Alberta. My first language was French. I didn't speak a word of English until I was ten years of age. I can remember moving to Edmonton and going to Sacred Heart School. The child next door was Ukrainian, but he could speak English. I didn't have the benefit of going through English as a second language, but luckily I went through Sacred Heart School, an English school with a French program. I went through Sacred Heart, and then my father thought it would be wise to send me away from home for a while, so I went to St. Boniface College in St. Boniface, Manitoba. The instruction there was all in French.

When I started teaching French immersion didn't exist, and I didn't consider teaching French as a second language [FSL or core French]. I taught Social Studies. It wasn't until I had been in the district for a while that I applied for a principalship. The person who approached me said, "Rick, you speak French. How would you like to be a principal in a French immersion school?" "What are you talking about?" I said. So I was appointed as principal of St. Thomas Aquinas School, which was situated where *La Cité francophone* is today. It was an old rattletrap building. But, starting as a principal there, I had the most fantastic place in the world to work, because of the people I worked with. That is really what it is all about. There was great enthusiasm on the part of the French immersion teachers, some of whom I still run into periodically.

I have an interest in French immersion, of course, because of the different roles I have played: as a principal of French immersion, and now in the Edmonton Catholic School Division's central office. We have eight schools involved in French immersion, at all levels from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Three of our schools are dual track schools: two elementary schools and one junior high. The other schools are all single track schools. One of the significant accomplishments for us in the past couple of years has been the success we've had in moving more students into high school, although we are still struggling. Some four or five years ago, when I was an area superintendent, a motion was put to the board to close the senior high program at École J.H. Picard School. We had 70 students in high school then. We were given a period of time to increase the enrolment of the school. If I'm correct, the enrolment at École J.H. Picard School is now at 190 students at the high school level. So, certainly, it has been rewarding for our hard working people.

In my handout [not available here] I listed our French immersion enrolments. You'll notice that the enrolment is very constant and represents 8% of our population. Enrolments have gone down a little from 2,652 students, which is a concern if you look at each school.

What I thought I would do is address some of the things, and how they work in terms of the Edmonton Catholic School Division. When I look through our policy manuals, I find no formal policies at all for French immersion. There is support for French immersion, though, through informal policies and practices. There is support for French immersion throughout our division.

I guess when you are in a city, you are fortunate in a way; you have candidates that want to apply for teaching positions because they want to come to, or stay in, a larger urban centre. We are also fortunate that we have many staff who can speak and interview in French, so right away we have a test of proficiency which is certainly important. We have a good working relationship with the Faculté Saint-Jean and that helps, as well. We also have some of our French immersion graduates teaching in our division and I think that speaks well for the division.

It was interesting, when I was listening to Dr. Halsall yesterday. She was talking about some of the research on proficiency in French of Francophones, Anglophones, and so on. We had some Anglophone teachers who have a high degree of proficiency in speaking and writing French. It is not always necessary to have Francophone teachers.

Some of the things we've done to try to support the program, and it may be the same in other jurisdictions, include having the busing rates the same for everybody in our division; it doesn't matter if the student is in a regular, French immersion, or bilingual (Ukrainian or Polish) program.

The introduction of English Language Arts is something that we have looked at over the years. We have always begun in Grade 2. About four or five years ago, we tried a pilot project where we started at Grade 1 for English Language Arts; we have dropped it. Schools will continue with the introduction of English Language Arts in Grade 2. And that's a matter of giving the students a fair start in terms of the French acquisition. I think some of the research showed yesterday that they'll pick English up before long.

We have a resource centre, which contains teacher resource manuals, student resources, videos and so on, and it has been very successful. It is located at the St. Anthony Resource Centre in the Old Strathcona area. Certainly it is a place where teachers can come.

I think one of the things that has been significant for French immersion is the federal French language grant. It is interesting to listen to Judy Grigat saying that they have always been able to work with those grants and have access to them. Until about three years ago, our federal French language grants from Alberta Education were put in a pool and just distributed to all schools. About three years ago, we started to do some work, partly with parents and administrators. Those grants are to be earmarked for French immersion. We have been very fortunate; we have been able to get these grants and $200,000 has been put aside strictly for French immersion programs. In working with the principals, I think we have been able to develop an understanding of what these grants are for. It hasn't always been easy, but there have certainly been some understandings. There is, as well, support from central office, which Judy was talking about. We have been able to work with the administrators and it is the support of the administrators in French immersion that assure the grants are effectively used.

I'll give you a bit of a breakdown as to what we've done with our grant. We have, and it is something we've had for a long time in our division, a full time French immersion consultant, presently Aline Brault. Aline, by the way, was involved on the Steering Committee for this conference.

Two years ago, we looked at the grants and, working with the principals, said, "OK, there are areas where we have to do some work." So we brought in one of our teachers, Nicole Beaudoin from St. Cecilia Junior High, to work as a facilitator in the areas of Math and Science. The facilitator/consultant works with the teachers in the classroom. That has certainly been very productive.

The $200,000 set aside more than pays for the salaries and operating budget for the consultants. The rest of the dollars go to the school for resources. But on top of that, as a division, we know that language programs do need extra dollars when it comes to the acquisition of resources. So in our language programs we have earmarked $15 dollars for each of the students in all of our schools. For example, in our Polish program we have about 200 students. They get 200 x $15 to buy resources. We've done the same with French immersion. These extra funds are from the general pooling, not from the French immersion grant but from the general grants we get from Alberta Education. We certainly see that the amounts of these grants have gone down. Like anything else, you fear the loss of those grants, because it would hurt.

Many years ago now, in Edmonton Catholic, we organized SWAC (a system-wide advisory committee for French immersion parents). They meet regularly; some of you may have gone to some of those meetings over the years. There is always a trustee, there are principals from the schools, and there are parents in attendance. What they do is to work in support of the French immersion program. They are probably the strongest group in advocating that French language grants be moved into a separate pot only for use of the French immersion programs. We worked closely with this group. We certainly appreciated the support that we have received from SWAC over the years. Of course it means that people have to go to evening meetings, but sometimes it is one of those things. If it is something you believe in, you go.

Our French immersion administrators meet regularly: the third Wednesday of every month. I'm just trying to give you some examples of the things that they do to support the program. Except for one junior high school principal, whose assistant principal attends the meeting, all our administrators are Francophone or speak French.

Publicity is certainly one thing that we have to keep working at, and I think that is where the support from SWAC really comes in. When I say that the support comes in from parents and students, I really believe it. When parents feel good about the program they will keep supporting the program. The support that we get from the SWAC and the work that is done through the director of communications in our division certainly helps. Sometimes it is the little things: it's the t-shirts that are in French, for example. It is a sign that people will see at least. There was an interesting presentation yesterday on special needs students in French immersion. I can remember advising some students in Grade 1—not advising the child but advising the parent—to move the student to the English program. Of course, that was way back when. Now there are many youngsters with special needs, so we certainly have to provide the assistance, and we've been lucky. For example, one of our psychologists is fluent in French.

I think that we have to ensure the viability of programs. There is often a feeling on the part of some parents that at the Grade 9 level their child should drop out, because of trying to get into university. It is tough and very competitive to get into certain areas, but having an academic orientation means to ensure that our students going through the French immersion program can

compete with any student. So we have done a lot of work in our division. Whether or not we like Achievement Exam results or Diploma Exam results, we are working with the French immersion teachers and administrators to analyse the results. Not just to get a number crunch. Anybody can do that, but what we can do in teaching practices and so on. It is not always easy work, but you have to ensure that the program can meet the needs of the students. If it can't, I believe that is where we will start seeing a greater drop-off rate.

I've mentioned funding. In terms of future viability, don't take anything for granted; there is competition out there. I think all of us have seen the drop in French as a second language [FSL or core French] in our schools. It is interesting, as I think Brian Callaghan mentioned, that you get the students who come out of Grade 9 and challenge the French courses for 15 easy credits, and that has certainly affected the high school program drastically.

I think that the whole collaborative nature of working with people in French immersion in and around Edmonton will help to ensure the future.

Thank you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee

**Phyllis Kobasiuk**

I am no longer a trustee. I served for nine years as a trustee in Parkland, but I am now involved at the municipal level of government as Reeve for Parkland County.

French immersion has been such a fabulous experience for my children, that even though my stay here today must be short due to another commitment, I felt I wanted to participate on the panel. I am 100% committed to French immersion programming. It has been the best thing that has happened to my daughters' education and has opened doors, cultural doors. My older daughter is in her thirteenth year of French immersion. The program has also allowed her to take German next year, possibly in Germany through an exchange program with high school.

The number of doors that learning second languages has opened has been tremendous. So even though I am no longer a trustee, I am totally committed which you will be able to tell from my comments here today.

Later, I will hand out a document [see handout following this speech] on my presentation today

What I am going to be talking about is a best practice. This is a Steering Committee that was established in Parkland Division to study French immersion for possible improvements. I think it worked well, and Parkland has promised to monitor and promote this committee's work. That's where my focus is, as I believe it to be a best practice.

School boards offering French immersion programs must respond to the needs of parents on behalf of their students in an effort to ensure sustainability and vitality of this proven program that prepares our children to meet the global opportunities of the next millennium.

Program needs are best identified by parents in concert with teachers, as student goals and successes are achieved. Proactive parents participate as executive members of individual school councils and come prepared with workable solutions identified through ongoing parent/teacher consultation.

The Parkland School Division French Immersion Steering Committee process stemmed from a level of trust, open communication, and a purposeful desire to act in a timely manner to address potential detraction from the program. Parents in the community had a sense and level of comfort that their elected trustee representatives were, in fact, advocates for the quality of education in this program that they had come to expect for their children. These parents were diligent supporters who chose to place their children in second language programs. They acted as tenacious, informed, active players in their children's education. They saw the big picture. They were broad thinkers who have a strong sense for the critical role education holds in the global context. Subsequently, the role of trustees, in support of this mindset, had to nurture a Board of

Education culture within that framework. A sense of program expectations, based on expressed parent community values, needed to exist.

Leading up to the establishment of the French Immersion Steering Committee, trustees and the board had developed a workable level of communication built on:

- Annual presentations to the board involving Canadian Parents for French addressing local interests such as upcoming sponsored public speaking events, student exchange programs and other celebrations of program success.
- ASBABE membership maintained on an annual basis, particularly as a means of keeping up-to-date on provincial or federal funding shifts or improvements.
- School council attendance by trustees to support parents and the councils, and to liaise or carry through with the board and staff.
- A formal committee structure promoting its meaningful partnership with all school councils in the district whereby parents of school councils drive the agenda.

Ongoing awareness is also nurtured through the local media about exchange programs like NACEL, whereby parents and trustees host French and other European students. A board policy should also, hopefully, be in place to promote second language, extracurricular opportunities for students. Muriel Dunnigan talked about the role of trustees in governance. Trustees can also participate and be aware of programs such as NACEL. I have brought five students from France to my home over five years, each for one month. And I think it's fabulous for your own children. The children come to learn and improve their English skills and create awareness in other people in the community.

Also, eager parents fresh to the education system with children in playschools need to be informed of the benefits and successes through a planned strategy by enthusiastic French immersion program parents. Myself, I became involved, although I didn't really intend to put my children in French immersion. But I had a young daughter for whom the program was, I felt, suitable. French immersion offered half-day programs that I believe are very good for young children. The English program, which is very close to our home, offered two full days, which wasn't suitable for a four-and-a-half-year-old child. I thought I could be involved. I sat on the executive as the vice-president. We needed to establish the program, so I become involved that way.

Parents at the playschool are the ones that need to be aware. Once their children are in Kindergarten they tend to be sort of fitting into the English program. Parents at the playschool level are very keen, interested, and open-minded to their children's education. They need to be approached by enthusiastic French immersion supporters.

So you ask the question: at what point was it deemed necessary to structure the review of possible improvements to the French immersion program? French immersion had been introduced in Parkland County in the late 1970s. By 1985, parents in Stony Plain and the surrounding rural communities were seeking closer identity and involvement with French immersion programs that were more accessible, rather that going the longer distance to Spruce Grove. There were sufficient enrolments, and commitment by parents, to work towards establishment of a viable program in Stony Plain. They wanted to see something in their own community. We have a large jurisdiction,

even more so with regionalization. We have parents that think: "While I'd like to put my child in French immersion, that means two hours busing to Spruce Grove." Parents did do that because they were committed, but you need something a little closer to their communities than that.

Then, when the lead program in Spruce Grove began to show signs of enrolment fluctuation in 1995, parents began examining why its offshoot in Stony Plain, in contrast, was experiencing growth and sustainability. It was then that the Steering Committee was supported by the board as a means to establish a mandate for a program review and recommendations for consideration and action. It was believed that membership on the committee needed to include stakeholders who had conviction and experience in the program, and those who had eyes and ears in the community. Membership included teaching staff, administration, and Canadian Parents for French. An efficient agenda, timelines, and means to measure outcomes, according to the committee mandate, ensured that the desired results would be achieved, so that the board would be in a sound position to make the important decisions for improving the program. Committee members further agreed to follow-up once the board's recommendation had been made. Several factors contributed to the success of the entire effort. Communication was built on a trusting partnership that, in turn, grew out of a sincere desire to meet individual student needs. The larger partnership hinged on parent support, teacher program delivery, the support of the school principal and the school council, central office administrative guidance, and the trustee/board commitment to policy and adherence to meeting client needs. By that I mean there is whole broad range of involvement, all the way from the trustees setting policy to parents' support and commitment. That is very important.

Once this framework was established, annual monitoring by the Superintendent and the board was seen to be important to long-term sustainability and growth of the French immersion program in the jurisdiction.

In the document that I am distributing there is a list of the final recommendations of the Steering Committee, as well as a list of the final recommendations for the meeting of the board that was held in June 1998.

The board was able to follow-up in a timely fashion to meet the needs that were communicated by the steering committee process. Also, since I was a parent of a graduating French immersion student, I consulted with my daughter. We don't always ask students how they feel about things; I think it is really important that we have a good sense of their input. They are very knowledgeable. They know how they feel about things, and when they have had a chance to observe French immersion or any other program for a number of years, they can see things clearly and with a worthwhile perspective that we as trustees should be listening to.

In this discussion, my daughter provided many insights.

Overall, the French immersion program should be an attractive, appealing program choice for students who want to participate and remain enrolled, not simply because they feel obligated to their parents or teacher to complete French Language Arts, for there are other reasons that they should feel they want to be involved in French immersion.

The high school program, of course, should offer French Language Arts, Social Studies, and Math by fully qualified instructors, whose first language is French. That is preferred, but not cast in stone. My daughter has told me that teachers who are dedicated to the success of French immersion studies are instructors of choice. Students know quality language, they value good French language skills and they appreciate teachers with these skills.

Also, planned educational tours or field trips prove beneficial for a variety of reasons, primarily because the result is the community sees the benefits, and the element of parent support and volunteerism creates enthusiasm, camaraderie and support amongst the families involved. French immersion programs of study must be vibrant and enticing for students who are keen to learn and see benefit in the challenge. We recognized that tours within Canada and in Europe involve planning on the part of the teachers and parents, but this creates a real-life bonus for students who seek second language cultural awareness. Reciprocal exchange programs involving French immersion students promote the benefit of French immersion studies.

A third point, which I believe is important, is that we need to ensure locally elected trustees support, and are knowledgeable about, the program. The community needs are best addressed in partnership with trustees, teachers and administration. On the Parkland School Division board right now there are no parents who have had students enrolled in French immersion. They need the opportunity to be aware of what the program involves, they need also to hear from the parents who are advocates and who feel this program is vitally important to the division's education system. They need to hear from parents; otherwise they won't have a full appreciation of the program. After all, it is the trustees who are the decision-makers sitting around the table. When there is a presentation about French immersion, it's really important that parents seek out trustees or that trustees seek out parents and students of French immersion and just say, "Tell me why you think this is beneficial. Explain the benefits to me. How do the students feel about it?" It's really important to gain their perspective.

Also, a high school French immersion certificate pays tribute to the commitment made by students over thirteen years of study in French immersion, and that recognition is something the education system and school board can offer students for their commitment.

High school novel study needs to be of higher calibre. The present novel vocabulary is particularly advanced in a context of storylines that are too simple. Students are seeking improved quality in the novels that are chosen, that's really important.

Most of all I believe French immersion should be fun for the students involved. The French language and culture have many benefits for students and families. Learning in French offers much to enjoy.

And with that, I will circulate these documents and conclude my presentation.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee

**Brian Mitchell**

Well, it's been thirty days since the election, just!

I will give you some background. Approximately six years ago, when I was first elected to the school board, I was the only trustee on the board whose children were attending French immersion.

So imagine, if you will, that during the course of the first thirty days as a new trustee on the board, the administration comes to you and says, as per Policy 302, notice of motion is given that the Board of Trustees of the Edmonton Catholic School District will close the senior high portion of École J. H Picard School on completion of the 1992/93 school year. Okay, that was November 10 actually, so it was more like twenty days into the process.

Well, we had some warning that this was coming, and a deadline, of course, because of timelines specified in Policy 302.

So there we were, with this recommendation.

This was a very interesting period. In the way of personal experience, I also sit on the board of the Canadian Council of Social Development, and was in Ottawa for a meeting of that board. So I had the school board secretary fax me the package that would normally be available to board members on Friday. I spent all my spare time that weekend working on a presentation and preparing for the speech I would give at the public meeting of the board on Monday evening. Interestingly enough, the board went in camera, as a result of discussion with the board and the administration, and I was able to persuade them to consider a compromise. That compromise was that the senior high program would remain open for an additional five years only so long as enrolment increased by at least 10% annually—that was the compromise.

Policy 302 had been put in place ten years before by a board that believed that schools and programs ought not to operate if they weren't economical. I am not faulting them, I am simply saying they did what they did in their best wisdom, and you inherit what your forefathers have left as a legacy. That is something you should note, as a trustee! You may want to recommend a different course of action. But if you do, you need to recognize that what you have articulated will still impact your jurisdiction five, ten, fifteen, twenty, in some cases maybe even thirty years hence.

So, in their wisdom the board had passed that policy and the administration was carrying out their responsibility, as they had been instructed by policy. We obtained that agreement and persevered with the program for the next five years.

At the time, there were strong school councils in all the French immersion schools, not the least of which was École J.H. Picard School. Judy Buddle was involved. She was the Secretary-Treasurer. There were great debates going on with the administration about how much French

immersion was costing, and how much it wasn't costing, and how much it was costing the other students. We had school councils writing to each of the other councils saying this was exorbitant, and keeping the French immersion program open for 71 students was taking money from other programs. In fact, that year we dropped to 67 students before the year ended. So, I think the compromise was a really good one.

To make a long story short, in each of the next four years the program increased, not by 10% but, on average, between 20% and 30% except for last year, the fifth year. In fact, last year we only increased by one or two percent. And we had a review last year, because I insisted that every year we review. Since I was the one who had advocated for the 10% minimum, and understood the compromise motion, I felt it was important to review adherence to that agreement on an annual basis.

We had a review last year, and we noted that over the five-year period the enrolment had increased very, very substantially, save for the last year. And I think the current enrolment is approximately 180–200. So the numbers are quite credible.

What should we learn from all of this? We should certainly learn that when boards are setting policy, there is a very clear need to work in harmony with the constituents, with the community whom you represent.

That was the beginning of a very interesting process, because it dealt with the French immersion senior high program. Given the input of the parents over an extended period of time, it still is an interesting process. Not because the board passed a resolution saying five years, 10% etc., but because the parents came forward, said they wanted it, and supported it.

You are all familiar with all encompassing policy manuals. You know, covering everything from soup to nuts in one binder. We had one, too. So, of course, we had all kinds of policies, and they had all been devised as a result of issues that had cropped up in the schools. Fair enough, that is the way policy-making is done. And it was all with good intentions. I'm not denigrating what was done.

In any case, I think we might be reinventing the wheel here. I hope not, but in some ways I think so. Over a period of five years in Edmonton Catholic, in fact, prior to 1992, the board was taking a look at their what responsibilities were, what their role was, and how to carry out that role and those responsibilities. They had gone beyond the school and said we were a corporate entity, a unique organization. We developed our organizational bylaws, and they were approved at the end of the 1989–1992 term by the board of the day. It was a good step, because it allowed us to stop our tampering with the other processes and procedures. We then, of course, looked at that as a guide for us as trustees at the time, because in addition to the policy manual, we now had this organizational bylaw that was much more manageable. We started to work ourselves through the policy governance process.

Some of the time it was a case of two steps forward, one back. Developing our mission statement and customizing our policies under the policy governance model were quite thorough, and it took a long time to do. But under the current policies I can't tell you the same thing wouldn't have happened to the French immersion program because according to our policies, it would be the

responsibility of the administration to be coming to the board and saying, "Look, this situation is not in keeping with policy." There is no doubt in my mind, though, that I wouldn't be that far removed anymore and I don't think the board would, because we would know that there were concerns out there and that our constituents represent a vital sounding board.

We moved on. A public relations team—community relations and marketing—works within SWAC [System-Wide Advisory Committee] now to promote the program. I think we've got some additional work to do on policies. This is our policy governance handbook now, by the way, which replaces the binder. It is about 25 or 30 pages long and some of those pages are blank. There is one policy to turn to if you wanted some ideas on French immersion for example, and it talks about parents and students. It is an executive limitation; there are four categories to policy governance, as some of you probably know. The header on that policy says, "With respect to interactions with parents and students, the superintendent shall not cause or allow conditions, procedure or decisions which are unsafe, unfair or disrespectful, undignified or unnecessarily intrusive, or which fail to provide… etc., etc." So, if a decision were going to be made about French immersion, that kind of decision would be made in consultation with the community and we have no problem interpreting that consultation would occur. So, under those kinds of circumstances, under those criteria, they should never involve political lobbies, so to speak.

It has been a long process, to get to the point of using policy governance as a model; this was approved last February. Now we are learning to live with it. We are all in this together. School councils are on-line now; SWAC is there. We have multiple opportunities to get feedback. The demand is there. We can adjust it if we choose. We are a service industry. We are responsive to the customers.

I am running overtime, so I'll stop there.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the Trustee

JOANNE FIEST

I would like to give you a broad picture of trustees' roles, by introducing you to the Alberta School Boards Association for Bilingual Education, or more familiarly known as ASBABE.

ASBABE is a provincial association whose membership is composed of elected trustees. The association promotes the maintenance and enhancement of all learning opportunities in French because Alberta is an integral part of Canada, and because all Albertans must enjoy a fair and equal opportunity to contribute to the Canadian political, economic, and cultural way of life of our bilingual country. The educational merits of a bilingual education are without question.

ASBABE was created over fifteen years ago for the primary purpose of promoting French language education in Alberta. For the first nine to ten years, ASBABE coordinated annual recruitment drives in eastern Canada to entice bilingual teachers to teach in the province's three distinct French language programs. And they are FSL [core French], French immersion, and Francophone. ASBABE, at the time, also provided an orientation for these new teachers to our education system and their new surroundings in Alberta. In the past five years, these orientation programs have not been held, primarily because the teachers we brought to Alberta put down roots and ended up staying here, marrying, and starting their own families. We have also begun to recognize that our own students graduating from Faculté Saint-Jean and other universities had the qualifications we were looking for.

*Membership.* Membership in ASBABE is open to any school district in the province that offers a French program. A membership fee is paid to the association. We stepped away from that a little bit in the last four years for a couple of reasons. The first reason was the restructuring of education and regionalization of school boards, when school boards were at different phases and district names were changing. We thought that for a year or two we would just hold up until everybody had their new names and then we would start re-introducing the membership fee. Second, ASBABE was in a very strong fiscal position, and for the short term could continue to be viable without charging the membership fees. Every year at our annual general meeting membership fees is part of the agenda; we discuss the current realities and see where we are. I believe that the fees were at $100 per board.

*ASBABE and its partners.* In education, we know that partnerships are an integral component of our business, but, most importantly, they benefit the students that we serve. To that end ASBABE has many partnerships. The first partnership that we have, which is a natural fit, is with the Alberta School Boards Association, since we are under their umbrella. We also use their strong support system because we serve the same members, and recently we have centralized our business in their office. They look after our financial services, which has really come to be, I think, one of the best moves our executive has made in the past five years. Typically, the books would follow the President so they never had a home. We will now get everything in one place and that will give the association some stability. One of the things that we have recently started working with ASBA on is a data base system for French immersion teachers. We see this, at its very early

stages, as a system where teachers who were looking to work in Alberta would get their name on a résumé type of reference, and where school boards who are looking for specialized assistance in the French immersion area, could find available teachers. So that is one of the areas that ASBABE and ASBA have agreed to develop further in the future.

Of course, our other partnership is with the school district and the trustees. Probably the most positive and strongest feature about ASBABE is that it provides trustees with a unique opportunity to meet and discuss their French language education concerns and also to talk about the successes, which I think is even more important.

Our third partnership is with Canadian Parents for French. Trustees need to interact with parents, and we've certainly heard that today. Our role is very much in sync with parents and should be. ASBABE has historically had a strong link with CPF. Every year at our annual general meetings CPF has a representative, and they provide our group with an update on the issues across the province as they see them. Another example of our partnership with CPF is this conference. Michael Savaryn, our President, has played a very strong leadership role in putting on this successful conference.

Alberta Education is another one of our partners. Recently, ASBABE was asked to sit on an advisory committee for the very successful book, *Yes, You Can Help! A Guide for French Immersion Parents*. I understand this book has now gone national, and if you don't know about it—find out about it. Also, over the past four years, ASBABE has had a representative at the French Immersion Advisory Committee. One of the roles this committee plays is to advise Alberta Education on the Western Canada Protocol and funding issues. For anyone who sat in on the "Funding and Costs" working session this morning, the talk about the French Immersion Advisory Committee and their request for input from this group gives you an idea of our role there. And that gives you a snapshot of ASBABE's involvement with Alberta Education.

Another partnership is the Department of Canadian Heritage in Ottawa. The president of ASBABE receives updates and documents, particularly relating to funding and protocol agreements. So we are kept up to date on emerging issues federally.

Those are just a few examples; I am sure there are more. We are always, as an association, looking for partnerships, and we continue to nurture each one of them.

I wanted to reflect on whom ASBABE assists. Quite simply, we are trustees who want to ensure quality French language programs, and that teachers have the necessary supports required to serve the children in our schools. That is whom ASBABE assists at the end of the day—we're helping to create that linkage.

*ASBABE and our challenges.* I think most of us know that topping the list of challenges is the current funding levels for French programs. School boards no longer received funding from the provincial government for French language programs, and currently the federal monies are decreasing and teacher funding is uncertain. There continues to be healthy discussions as to the actual cost of French language programs and the variance of costs from district to district. Do we have an advocacy role to play here? I certainly think we do. That would be one of the challenges ASBABE has and will continue to have in the short-term anyway.

Another challenge that I see ASBABE facing is the provincial decline of students enrolling in French immersion, even though some areas are growing. Why is this happening? Is it a perception problem? Is it political agendas? What can be done and what role can ASBABE play?

The third challenge is the future of ASBABE. Where do we go from here? We are like a teenager looking for an identity now. There are challenges that we can grab on to and that we can work with, but we are looking for an identity. As I have said, our focus has been primarily on the French language, but we have had discussions at our past two annual general meetings about expanding to include other languages: Spanish, Italian, Ukrainian, and so on. Do we expand and bring in other languages? That is another philosophical issue that ASBABE will have to look at in the short term.

*ASBABE and its future.* New leadership and new membership is required. Following the province-wide elections when there are fresh starts and new challenges occurring, now is an appropriate time to consider your involvement. Each November ASBABE holds its annual general meeting in Edmonton. Each board is provided notice and should appoint a board member to attend. When you attend one of our ASBABE general meetings we serve wine and cheese throughout the meeting, creating a French ambiance. It is not formal; it's just a nice time to set direction. ASBABE can do incredible things in the future, but we can't do them without people and input.

# CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
## FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### *USING THIS TOOL FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION*

This tool has been developed by Canadian Parents for French (CPF), the national network of volunteers which promotes and creates opportunities for young Canadians to learn and use French as a second language.

The self-assessment tool is intended to help schools assess for themselves how their French-second-language (FSL) programs are faring. It is not CPF's intent to collect and compare these assessments, but rather to **encourage a conversation** among all stakeholders about the importance and performance of FSL programs in the local community. Programs and the needs of communities will vary across the country but dialogue among all those involved in and affected by these programs can only lead to improvements in both the FSL programs themselves and the levels of support for them within the school system.

Eighteen indicators are outlined below with brief explanations. School performance in each area can be assessed using a five-point scale. The indicators are based on research done on FSL programs in Canada over the last 30 years. (Please note that for the purposes of this self-assessment tool, FSL programs refer to both immersion and Core French programs.)

The self-assessment tool can be used to assess both French immersion and Core French programs (also known as basic French in some provinces). In order to use it effectively, evaluate only one of these program types at a time. (For example, if you decide to evaluate your Core French program, answer all the questions with only Core French in mind.) You can go back and use the tool to evaluate the other program option(s) at another time and we recommend that you do so in another, separate session.



CPF *Canadian Parents for French*

# CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
## FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**The suggested way to use this tool is to engage in a large group discussion on the indicators. With all participants gathered (teachers, students, parents, administrators):**

1) **READ** the indicators one at a time;

2) **DISCUSS** the level of implementation of each indicator in your school;

3) **COME TO A CONSENSUS** on where your program fits on the implementation scale;

4) **NOTE THE RESULTS** on the assessment results grid.

Once you have considered all the indicators, you will have a picture of your FSL program's strengths and areas for improvement. This tool and the discussions it will involve provide an excellent opportunity to raise issues important for FSL programs and to celebrate program successes. Be proud of your school's strengths and work now to build an action plan in those areas where you feel you need improvement. The discussion itself will be valuable, but you may also want to follow up on certain areas to ensure that next year's assessment is even better!

If you find that a question does not apply to your situation, you may skip it. Be careful however about skipping a question too quickly just because it is easier than trying to answer it. (If your school doesn't rate well on a question, this is no reason to skip it!) There may be areas where you feel that responsibility for the issue does not rest with the school alone (e.g., involvement of the school board). In this case, your school may need to ask where to find support for improvement of this indicator, but the indicator is still important to a quality FSL program.

CPF is committed to supporting you as you undertake this self-assessment process. At our website, **www.cpf.ca**, you will find dedicated resources to assist you, including information on how to gather together a group of stakeholders and how to decide if you need a facilitator; fast facts and current research to help you in your deliberations on each indicator; a list of contacts for your local CPF Branch; an action plan format to help you take the next steps in improving your FSL programs—and much more!

### *HOW TO ASSESS PERFORMANCE*

To assess your school's performance in each area (i.e., for each indicator), establish a rating using the following five-point scale.

| RATING | PERFORMANCE |
|---|---|
| A | VERY STRONG |
| B | STRONG |
| C | MODERATE |
| D | FAIR |
| E | NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT |

**A. VERY STRONG:** This means that your school's performance in this area is excellent. The indicator has been fully implemented or is being regularly applied and is reviewed regularly for possible corrections or improvements where needed.

**B. STRONG:** School performance in this area is good. The indicator has been largely implemented but no review process is in place to allow for possible corrections and improvements where needed.

**C. MODERATE:** The indicator has been partially implemented or some definite progress is being made towards its implementation. The school may be further ahead in some areas than in others.

**D. FAIR:** A rating of fair would apply when the issue has been explored and there is some acknowledgement of its importance but little or no action has been taken. Issues and/or obstacles preventing full implementation of this indicator may have been identified.

**E. NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT:** School activity in this area is non-existent (e.g. no formal discussion has occurred and no action has been taken).

**GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR SCHOOL'S SELF-ASSESSMENT, AND CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR CANADIAN CHILDREN!**

## *DERSTANDING THE INDICATORS*

The 18 indicators are grouped under three main themes: enrolment, program quality and accountability. A short text describes each indicator and related issues.

# ENROLMENT

This set of indicators focuses on enrolment issues (i.e., ensuring maximum access to FSL programs).

1. **AVAILABILITY. FSL Programs are available to all students, including gifted students and those with special needs.**
   Enrolment in FSL programs is encouraged by policies and practices that provide for the participation of interested students. FSL programs that are available to all students provide free transportation for both urban and rural students and have no program enrolment limits or admission criteria. Programming for gifted and special needs students is also provided within FSL programs to ensure that the programs are available to all students.

2. **COMMUNICATIONS. All FSL options are clearly communicated and promoted.**
   Enrolment in FSL programs is enhanced when parents and students receive relevant information. Effective communication and promotion of FSL programs can be accomplished by holding annual information sessions for prospective parents and by ensuring that informational materials encourage enrolment. Information about FSL options and entry points should be distributed regularly so that informed choices may be made as the student progresses through the educational system.

3. **REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE. All FSL programs provide remedial assistance to students who need it.**
   Students experiencing academic difficulties are retained in FSL programs when they are given extra help. FSL programs should encourage these students to continue their FSL studies by ensuring that adequate remedial services and resources are available to all students who need them.

# PROGRAM QUALITY

The second set of indicators encompasses a variety of program quality issues.

4. **FSL POLICIES. FSL policies concerning staffing, resources and funding exist and are evaluated regularly.**
   FSL policies provide an opportunity for the school to state its commitment to providing quality FSL programs, to clearly define the conditions that must be met to achieve quality programs, and to provide a model for evaluating progress toward these goals.

5. **FSL RESOURCES. Sufficient French classroom and library resources and learning materials are available.**
   FSL programs require quality resources and classroom materials. There should be enough French textbooks for all students and a varied collection of resource centre and classroom materials that have been specifically designed for French-second-language learners.

6. **SCHOOL COMMUNITY. The entire school community supports and encourages FSL programs.**
   Quality French-second-language programs thrive where the entire school supports and encourages the use of French. This may mean that the French language and culture are visible in the school outside the classroom in the form of posters or hallway conversations, and in the use of French at recess or during announcements and assemblies.

7. **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY. Extra-curricular activities in French are available to all FSL students.**
   The use of French for non-school communication has been shown to enhance language mastery for FSL learners. To encourage the use of French outside of the classroom, the school should promote both in-school activities (e.g., clubs, Internet pen pals) and out-of-school activities (e.g., field trips, student exchanges). Parents and students should be informed of the importance and availability of these activities.

8. **QUALIFIED TEACHERS. Qualified teachers, including substitute teachers, are available for all FSL assignments.**
   In order to ensure effective second-language instruction, it is necessary for FSL programs to ensure that all teachers assigned to FSL classes are fluent in French and have received training designed specifically for second-language instructors. The school may want to discuss with the school district the need for a strategy to recruit and retain qualified FSL teachers, and to ensure that qualified substitute teachers are available when needed.

9. **COMPETENCE PROFILE. New teachers are hired on the basis of French-language competence, teaching ability, and subject-matter knowledge.**
   In order to provide quality FSL programs, school administrators must ensure that FSL teachers have the necessary skills to be effective second-language teachers. A competence profile that evaluates French-language competence and teaching ability should be used when selecting new teachers. Teachers hired for subject areas such as math and science in high school immersion classes should also be subject-matter specialists.

10. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Professional development for FSL teachers is supported and encouraged.**
Teachers should be assured of a rich variety of professional development activities designed specifically for FSL teachers. School administrators must encourage and support their participation in these activities.

11. **CORE FRENCH INTEGRATED. Core French is treated as an integral part of the main curriculum.**
*(This indicator is only used when reviewing Core French programs.)*
Core French is treated as an integral part of the main curriculum when it is given the same importance as other subjects. Timetabling conflicts that put Core French courses in competition with other popular options should be minimized. Core French classes should also be provided with the same level of resource materials as other subjects. Core French is taught in a Core French classroom to provide a supportive environment.

12. **HIGH SCHOOL COURSES. High school programs offer high quality FSL courses that are accessible to all interested students.**
*(This indicator is only used when reviewing high school FSL programs.)*
Quality high school FSL courses are accessible to all interested students. Timetabling conflicts that put FSL courses in competition with other popular options, and gaps in FSL studies caused by semestering are minimized. Students have been consulted, and the school offers a rich variety of FSL courses that are known to appeal to students.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The final set of indicators focuses on accountability issues.

13. **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT. Parents are involved in decision making about FSL programs.**
Parents are important stakeholders in FSL programs and should be included in FSL decision making. Parents should be encouraged to attend and actively participate in meetings and should be systematically notified when FSL issues are to be considered.

14. **CLASS TIME RESPECTED. The amount of class time dedicated to instruction in French is specified and respected.**
In quality FSL programs, class time dedicated to instruction in French is clearly specified and consistently respected. Teachers are not required to vary the time allotted to French instruction to accommodate other subjects or school activities. Remedial, special education, and gifted programming is equitably distributed across the students' timetables so that students are not systematically removed from French classes. Administrators ensure that guidelines on French instructional time are met.

15. **STABILITY. The types of FSL programs and the grade levels at which students enter programs are stable from year to year.**
FSL programs operate most effectively when they have achieved stability. It is necessary to ensure that stable program funding has been secured so that decisions about the continuation of FSL need not be taken annually. Entry points and the types of FSL programs offered should be maintained from year to year; program changes and reductions of entry points should be avoided.

16. **PROVINCIAL GUIDELINES. Provincial guidelines for FSL programs are communicated directly to parents, teachers, and administrators.**
It is necessary for all stakeholders in FSL education to have timely, accurate information upon which to base decisions and policies. Provincial guidelines should be systematically communicated and made readily available to parents, teachers, and administrators. The guidelines should be reviewed regularly to ensure that FSL programs are responsive to guideline changes.

17. **DESIGNATED FUNDING. All government funding designated for FSL programs is used specifically for those programs.**
In order to develop and maintain quality programs, government funding designated for FSL programs must be used specifically for those programs. School administrators must be aware that these funds exist and ensure that they are not re-directed for other purposes. Records should be kept concerning the use of these funds and these records reviewed to ensure that funds are used effectively.

18. **PROGRAM REVIEW. The quality and effectiveness of FSL programs are assessed regularly and adjustments are made when necessary.**
In order to develop and maintain quality FSL programming, student outcomes in school FSL programs and current FSL research findings must be reviewed regularly. A process should be in place to ensure that FSL policy, practice, and curriculum is adjusted in response to these reviews. Changes to policy, practice, and curriculum should be supported by professional development activities.

# CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL
## FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## ASSESSMENT RESULTS SUMMARY

| MAIN AREA | INDICATOR | PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | A VERY STRONG | B STRONG | C MODERATE | D FAIR | E NEEDS GREAT IMPROVEMENT |
| ENROLMENT | 1 AVAILABILITY | | | | | |
| | 2 COMMUNICATIONS | | | | | |
| | 3 REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE | | | | | |
| QUALITY | 4 FSL POLICIES | | | | | |
| | 5 FSL RESOURCES | | | | | |
| | 6 SCHOOL COMMUNITY | | | | | |
| | 7 EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY | | | | | |
| | 8 QUALIFIED TEACHERS | | | | | |
| | 9 COMPETENCE PROFILE | | | | | |
| | 10 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | | | | | |
| | 11 CORE FRENCH INTEGRATED | | | | | |
| | 12 HIGH SCHOOL COURSES | | | | | |
| ACCOUNTABILITY | 13 PARENT INVOLVEMENT | | | | | |
| | 14 CLASS TIME RESPECTED | | | | | |
| | 15 STABILITY | | | | | |
| | 16 PROVINCIAL GUIDELINES | | | | | |
| | 17 DESIGNATED FUNDING | | | | | |
| | 18 PROGRAM REVIEW | | | | | |

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# HOW TO USE THE SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

CPF has produced the following documents on how to use the School Self-Assessment Tool:

- Preparing for the CPF School Self-Assessment Meeting
- Involving Students in the School Self-Assessment Process for French-Second-Language Programs
- Developing Action Plans and Advocacy Strategies

CPF further advises that:

Inevitably, programs and the needs of communities will vary across the country. But CPF believes that communication among all those involved in and affected by FSL programs can only lead to improvements in the programs themselves and the levels of support for them within school systems. CPF encourages schools to adapt the Tool for their particular needs and circumstances as necessary.

More information and updates can be found at
<www.cpf.ca/English/resources/School%20Self/index.htm>

Note: In Alberta, the term "FSL" refers to core French (French taught as a subject). However, in this document the terms "French-second-language programs" and "FSL" refer to French immersion and core French programs collectively.

## PREPARING FOR THE CPF SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT MEETING

### Recruiting a self-assessment group

Your school self-assessment group should include all stakeholders: core French and French immersion teachers, special education co-ordinators, guidance counsellors, parents and students from both core and immersion FSL programs. This group could include, but should not be limited to parents and staff who are on the School Council or similar body. You can ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate by putting a notice in the school newsletter or by sending letters to parents and teachers. Don't forget to determine the ways in which students may best participate before the first meeting. [See: INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR FRENCH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS on page 4.]

It is important to emphasize that all participants must be committed to engaging in positive dialogue and to working for positive change. This is not an opportunity to criticize individual teachers, parents, students or principals, nor will results be used to compare schools. Offer the information that background information is available for participants. This will help to reassure parents and students who may be concerned that they lack information about certain aspects of FSL education. Make sure that it is clear that both core and immersion programs will be addressed. Emphasize, as well, that this self-assessment will lead to positive change; action and advocacy plans will be developed and implemented.

Once a group has been established, encourage all participants to prepare for the discussion:

- Distribute the self-assessment tool in advance so that participants have time to think about the issues.
- Encourage all participants to prepare for the discussion by reading the background information on the CPF website. It is a good idea to ensure that at least one or two people make a commitment to review the background material.
- Decide how the School Self-Assessment process will be organized. You could set aside three hours to complete the assessment or hold three shorter sessions to cover one assessment category at a time.
- Meetings to develop and implement your Action/Advocacy Plan should be scheduled after the assessment when participants had an opportunity to think about strategies to address issues identified during the assessment.

**Recruiting a Facilitator**

It is important that all participants in your school's self-assessment feel comfortable sharing their views and hearing the opinions of others. Parents and students may feel hesitant to express opinions if the principal or a teacher chairs the meeting. Similarly, school staff may feel criticized if a parent is in charge of the process.

These problems can be avoided by recruiting a neutral facilitator. A facilitator can ensure that a non-confrontational atmosphere is maintained so that all stakeholders feel comfortable that their views will be heard and respected. The facilitator may remind participants that they all share a common goal: to effect positive change. A facilitator will also ensure that discussions remain on topic, that all self-assessment indicators are addressed, and that action and advocacy plans are developed.

Facilitators may be recruited from within your community. Here are a few places you may try:

United Way Associations
Non-profit agencies
Social service agencies
Religious organizations
Volunteer Bureau
University and College professors
Police Services

## INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FRECH-SECOND-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

There are a number of ways in which student participation in the French- Second-Language program school self-assessment process may be organized. Use your best judgment to determine which option best meets the age, maturity and skills of your student body and the needs of the discussion group. You might choose to involve senior high school students in the discussion group and have younger students contribute in different ways. Elementary school students might best be involved only in implementing action plans. Remember to include both core and immersion students in your plans if your school offers both programs.

1. **Focused participation**. Students attend and participate in the discussion of topics to which they may reasonably make a contribution or where they express a particular interest. For example: high school course content.

2. **Indirect participation**. Students respond to a questionnaire to elicit their comments about some or all of the issues in the self-assessment instrument. You will need to choose issues that can reasonably be addressed by your students - the age, maturity and experience of the students should guide your efforts.

3. **Action Plan Participation**. Students are involved only in implementing action plans to address issues identified by the self-assessment. (See **Developing Action Plans and Advocacy Strategies** for suggestions) Again, choose activities and levels of responsibility that reflect the skills and experience of the students.

Here are a few examples of action plan activities in which students could participate; older, more mature students might be able to adopt a leadership role. **Remember to include both core and immersion students in both organization and implementation whenever possible.** This will help you to work toward the goals of indicators 8 and 13 and ensure that students from both programmes have input to the process.

- Students might survey their peers about their opinions about the content of FSL courses. It is important that the principal assign staff or that parents volunteer to work with the students on questionnaire design and to assist with distribution.

- Students can organize or participate in a display of core and immersion student work in communal areas of the school. Staff and/or parents should ensure that the initiative continues throughout the school year and in subsequent years. This might be a good way to start a French Club - students are often motivated to participate in a concrete activity.

- Students might organize or participate in the organization of joint core and immersion extra-curricular activities. Depending on the age and skills of your students, they might:

    a. Respond to a questionnaire about their interests
    b. Research extra-curricular possibilities
    c. Organize an extra-curricular activity for core and immersion students. Staff guidance and approval will be necessary.

- Students could start a French Club; the amount of staff and parent volunteer support required will depend on the age and skills of the students.

## DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS AND ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

### ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

As your group works through the CPF School Self-Assessment Instrument, you will notice that some indicators identify policies and procedures that are determined at the school board or Department of Education level. In these cases simply complete the assessment instrument as though the school had the responsibility and make a note that someone else has greater control over this indicator. Your action plan around these indicators might include an advocacy component; bringing issues to the attention of those responsible and working with them to effect positive change. The following model is designed to help you to develop action plans to address some of the issues that might arise. **[See Key Principles of Advocacy on page 11.]**

### DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

You will find that some issues are quickly and simply addressed (for example teachers may volunteer to record hours of instruction in French; students might organize a display of core and immersion projects in a public area of the school), while other issues require a good deal of planning, co-ordination and advocacy to achieve long term goals (for example developing time tables to ensure that choosing immersion and/or core French options does not preclude enrolment in other popular course options; information gathering and advocating for special education and remedial services for immersion students).

Developing a formal Action Plan to identify "next steps" will help bring you that much closer to a better self-assessment next year and may help you to resolve long-standing issues with your FSL programs.

## ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

### PHASE I - PREPARE

#### Define the issue(s)

You have already defined your advocacy issues by completing the CPF School Self-Assessment Tool and identifying those areas that cannot be addressed at the school level.

#### Gather Information

Once the key issues have been identified, it is time to gather information. For each issue, the important questions to answer include:

- What, if any, existing resources address the problem?
- Who are the key people to approach for help in rectifying the problem?

To be successful, you must have a thorough knowledge of your surroundings – prevailing attitudes towards the issue(s), types of alternatives, etc.

Who has strong links and influence regarding the issue? Have there been any previous school or board advocacy efforts involving the same or related issue? Find out what strategies were used, who was involved and what the results were.

**Identify supporters if advocacy is required**

Now that your information has been gathered, it is time to begin identifying potential supporters. [See Supporters Inventory form on page12.] Try to attract support from those who are affected by the issue and from decision-makers who could resolve the issue.

If you are having difficulty gaining support, stop until you have had an opportunity to re-think your issue. Perhaps the circumstances and timing aren't right or your presentation is off-track. Find out!

## PHASE 2 - PLAN

**Review the issue and identify the preferred solution.**

Before developing the Action Plan, review the work carried out in the preparation phase. Start by reviewing the issue: what is it, why is it a problem, who does it affect and how does it affect them?

Now identify the preferred solution. Be as specific as possible. Anticipate possible outcomes of your efforts, defining the changes that will take place, and who and how they will affect. Consider both the desired end and how you wish to influence the awareness and attitudes of

decision-makers. You may wish to state the outcomes you would like to achieve:

- Short term: what is a realistic level to achieve within the next year while continuing to work toward the ideal.
- Long term: if the advocacy effort is successful, what is the ideal condition in the future?

**Choose the route**

Once the preferred solution has been selected, take stock of resources and identify the appropriate systems, groups and individuals that can make the solution happen.

If advocacy is required, remember that approaching the wrong person in an organization wastes time and causes frustration. Don't expect someone to change something if they have no influence in that area. Reach the people within the organization who actually have the authority to make the changes you are requesting.

- What is their track record on similar issues?
- Who are likely to be your strongest supporters and who are likely to oppose the issue?
- What concerns are most important to the supporters and opponents? How does your issue relate to these concerns? How can you appeal to both groups most effectively?
- Be prepared and anticipate the arguments that might be put forth in opposing your issue. Develop a strategy to counter these arguments. Be able to clearly demonstrate how the issue is creating problems.

**Develop the Advocacy Action Plan**

You know what the issue is; you know how you want it resolved; and you know whom best to approach to achieve your goal. Now is the time to develop your action plan. [See Action Plan Steps on page 13.]

As you begin to develop your approach, avoid selecting a specific course of action too soon. Brainstorm and be as creative as possible. List every potential strategy and action idea. However set a time limit of 30 minutes, to ensure a concentrated effort.

You have already identified the organizations and individuals to approach in seeking resolution of the issue. As strategies are selected, it is important to understand your target audience to ensure a good fit between your proposals and their goals and philosophy.

Now, select the strategies that will be most effective, keeping in mind that it is often necessary to educate your target group.

In order to achieve a favourable resolution of the issue, you should prepare back-up strategies in case the first plan fails. Be sure to include strategies aimed at reaching non-supporters.

**Formalize the action plan and organize its implementation**

Start by examining your group with a view to deciding how best to organize, to achieve your goal. You could develop a committee structure and assign each committee a number of tasks or simply assign each task to an individual or small group.

### PHASE 3 - ACT (IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN)

The specific steps in the **ACT PHASE** depend on your issue(s). Follow the action steps developed previously. Keep a note about what goes smoothly and what doesn't work, and comment as to why. This information will be useful when evaluating the Plan and for future reference.

If you are advocating for change, remember to take a positive approach while fostering support. Keep your supporters aware of what is happening as interest can wane without follow-up. Timing is critical, so select the opportune moment to put your plan into action. Ideally, try not to compete with other issue(s).

When presenting the issue, find out what process the School Board or Ministry uses to deal with issues. Remember that the process may be time consuming. Be prepared to take additional information to meetings and always take a written brief of your presentation. Include a copy for those to whom you are presenting.

During the presentation be positive and professional. An antagonistic stance will not encourage the decision-makers to react favourably to your issue. Make them feel that it is their issue as well and stress that you have faith in their ability to address the issue. Don't expect a decision right away.

## PHASE 4 - IF ALL ELSE FAILS

The best-laid plans of mice and men...despite being prepared, you can still run into roadblocks. Don't drop the issue, but avoid making a personal attack on the individual or group. Acknowledge that you have a difference of opinion and leave the door open for a possible reconciliation.

If your target group denies that the issue is a problem present your facts and figures, point out that your concerns fall under their mandate, and ask them to support their belief that the issue is not a problem.

If your issue is deemed to be of low priority bring your supporters to subsequent meetings, present your facts and, if your assessment group feels it to be appropriate, arrange media coverage.

If you are told that there is no money to address your issue point out that resolving the issue will save money, offer to assist with fundraising and be prepared to find as many funding sources as possible.

If you are experiencing delaying tactics set reasonable deadlines for action and do periodic follow-up and progress checks. If you are asked to join a committee that historically hasn't produced any results, accept the offer and work to add substance and meaning to the committee's activities. Continue to focus on the issue and make constructive suggestions for

resolving it. By offering to cooperate with the decision-makers, you open the door to a positive reception of your issue. Give them a chance to change their minds gracefully.

## PHASE 5 - EVALUATE

Review each step in your action/advocacy plan and determine whether it was implemented as it was originally designed. If not, note how the steps were modified and ask the following questions. Was the key issue clearly defined? Was the most appropriate solution chosen? Which strategies worked? Were there adequate resources to carry out the plan? Were the most appropriate advocacy target chosen? Was the timing appropriate? Were the presentations effective? Were decision-makers convinced that change is necessary?

Remember that many first efforts are not successful. Have patience and remember that your efforts will have an effect over time. [See Evaluation Phase on page 14.]

# Key Principles of Advocacy

The following principles of advocacy will greatly enhance your chances for a successful resolution.

1. Know your case and document your facts.
2. Whenever possible, ensure that you are familiar with current policies.
3. Know opposing cases and arguments and develop a strategy for countering them. You may find that role-playing will help you to refine your strategies.
4. Advocacy by coalition requires effective collaboration. Ensure that each person has a clearly defined role and that communication within your group is timely and effective.
5. Know your resources and allies. Consult these people, inform them of your issues and enlist their assistance.
6. Intervene at a level that is high enough to get the job done.
7. Take a positive approach. Assume good will on the part of the system and communicate this assumption to those within the system. Use positive documentation and give credit where it is due. Whenever possible, recruit those within the system to your cause.
8. Demonstrate to those in the system the ways in which system interferes with or defeats its own goals.
9. Never engage in an overt power struggle without the agreement of your planning group.
10. Always be aware of the vulnerability of those within your group. The group must assess risks and weigh them carefully against possible gains before choosing confrontation.

# SUPPORTERS' INVENTORY

**Consumers**
(Those affected by the issue)

**Currently supportive?**
YES NO

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

**Decision-Makers**
(Those whose decisions could resolve the issue)

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

**Legitimizers**
(Those whose 'stamp of approval' would be helpful)

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

**General Public**
(Groups and individuals who may be interested in the issue)

_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___
_____ ___ ___

# ACTION PLAN STEPS

ISSUE: _____

| GROUPS | STRATEGIES | WHO IS RESPONSIBLE | DEADLINE | RESOURCES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONSUMERS | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| DECISION MAKERS | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| LEGITIMIZERS | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| GENERAL PUBLIC | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

# EVALUATION PHASE

**ISSUE:**_____

**DATE:** _____

**PREFERRED SOLUTION:**

_____
_____
_____
____

| LIST OF QUESTIONS | POSITIVE CHANGE | NO CHANGE | NEGATIVE CHANGE | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

# Appendix E

- Brault, Aline, Marcel Lavallée, Robert Martin, and Alain Nogue. **"A French Immersion School Culture: The Foundation for Success."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Hampton, Wayne, Emilie Keane, and Donna Waraksa. **"Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.* Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999. Reprinted with permission.

- Wurst, Anita, and Bill Brownlee. **"Creating English-French Immersion Harmony in Dual Track Schools: Canadian Rockies District Task Force."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

- Mayne, Lise, and Wayne Hampton. **"Understanding the French Immersion Teacher: Implications for Training, Hiring, Supervising, and Supporting Your French Immersion Staff."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000. Reprinted with permission.

BACKGROUNDER

# A French Immersion School Culture: The Foundation for Success

## General Considerations

Schools offering immersion programs differ from regular schools in that they require children to learn concepts, skills and attitudes in French at the same time as they are acquiring the language itself. In immersion, the second language used by children to negotiate and structure meanings becomes a primary focus of the teaching-learning process. This significant difference between regular and immersion schooling must be accounted for when defining, planning and creating the school environment. In other words, the culture in a school offering an immersion program cannot be a carbon copy of the culture that exists in a school where the language of instruction is the language of the home and of the community at large.

In the context of this presentation, school culture is defined as the interplay of elements, forces and people that constitute an effective learning environment. The immersion school culture must enable children to be and to learn in a meaningful, rich and secure second-language-learning world. A person learning a language in the real world is encapsulated, so to speak, in contexts that provide meaning and support his learning. An effective immersion school culture must compensate for many of the elements and forces that naturally define the normal language learning process. It is precisely because second language learning in a school offering an immersion program is so often confined to activities organized by the teacher and occurring in the classroom that planning and creating an effective immersion school culture becomes so important. Because of the nature of immersion schooling, there is a need to create a more natural language learning environment.

In order to create a culture that will foster learning, of both the second language and the subject matter, it is important that school trustees, and district and school administrators reflect on the factors that affect second language acquisition. These factors can be summarized as follows:

1. *Relevance:* Learning French must be perceived as pertinent by the learner. Learning French must be valued by persons who are perceived as important by the learner.

2. *Meaningful communication:* Learning French is most effective when the learner is placed in authentic learning situations, situations approximating real life.

3. *Interest:* Activities in French must be of interest to the learner. They must capture the student's imagination.

4. *Security:* Learning French is most effective in a safe and caring environment where the learner perceives that he or she can take risks without fear of ridicule.

5. *Confidence:* Language learning is most effective when the learner is confident that he or she has the wherewithal to tackle the task at hand and that he or she will be successful.

6. *Interaction:* Learning French is most effective when the learner is given opportunities to interact with persons who are important to him or her.

7. *Exposure*: Hearing and reading the same words and idiomatic expressions in different contexts and situations reinforce and enrich the learning of a language.

8. *Models:* Learning French is most effective when the learner is exposed to good and consistent French language models.

These eight factors are at work every day within the classroom. The degree to which teachers are aware of them and plan their teaching and student activities accordingly greatly determines the level of linguistic and academic achievement reached by their students.

If these factors are true of the classroom, they are also true of the whole school. Indeed what takes place in a school determines much of the implicit curriculum of that school. Announcements over the intercom, school activities, teaching methodology and staff interactions are some of the factors that determine what students learn. Theoretically, it would be possible to infer many of the language learning outcomes in a school offering an immersion program from an analysis of the practices in that school. For instance, in a French immersion school where announcements are made exclusively in English, the immersion students learn that speaking about what goes on in the school is done more effectively in English. If learning activities are teacher-centred and rarely involve interaction in the target language, immersion students learn that learning French is an academic pursuit. Similarly, when French immersion students hear the immersion teachers speaking among themselves in English, they learn that French is not very useful in the world outside the classroom.

Creating an effective immersion school culture will require the bridging of the gap between the informal or implicit curriculum and the formal curriculum from Alberta Education. In order to achieve this goal, trustees and central office and school administrators, in close cooperation with teachers, will need to take a good look at the school environment and use of French in the school. This presentation will examine the school environment, the potential of optional courses, and the integration of technology in the teaching/learning process as they relate to an effective immersion school culture.

## The Environment in a School Offering an Immersion Program

What is the difference between an ordinary meal and one that immediately catches your attention and whets your appetite? What is the difference in environment between an ordinary immersion school and one that immediately catches the students' attention and whets their appetite to learn more? What is the difference between a good immersion program and a great program you'll be proud to promote?

These are three questions that fundamentally share a common response; one must pay very close attention to not only the *what* but also to the *how* of what we do. A chef will pay close attention to the variety of ingredients used in a dish and to their presentation. A good chef will not be afraid to use ingredients we may not know or to use familiar ingredients in a very original way. And what about the setting? Restaurants spend impressive amounts of money to design or redesign room settings conducive to an enjoyable eating experience in 1998.

Is the task of an immersion school administrator all that different from that of the chef and restaurateur? Not really. The French immersion administrator will want to establish a school environment that catches the students' interest and nourishes their enthusiasm, and will want to communicate in words and in actions that the French immersion program is an important and valued facet of the school. The French immersion administrator will implement practices and policies that demonstrate, unequivocally, support for his immersion staff as they implement classroom practices that support effective learning of the French language, effective acquisition of the curriculum, and effective understanding and appreciation of the French culture.

What are the unique challenges facing the school administrator of a dual track school? Is such an administrator at a disadvantage when compared to the administrator of an immersion centre? Should the policies and practices of single and dual track schools differ?

Which policies should trustees adopt to ensure that the students entrusted to their district's care are given an education second to none? How can central office personnel provide leadership as well as assistance in issues related to planning, staffing and professional development?

Effective teaching and learning is not just a matter of the classroom but of the whole school. What are those tried and true practices of successful French immersion schools? of school districts where immersion is doing well? What are those little but so important, yet too often overlooked things that can make such a huge difference? How can students, teachers, parents, administrators, guidance personnel, reading clinicians and central office personnel contribute to the creation and maintenance of an effective immersion school culture?

French immersion has been part of the Canadian experience for the past 30 years. Those years have provided an abundant crop of ideas, strategies and practices. This workshop will spotlight some of them.

## Communication and Information Technologies

Computer technology has become an integral part of schooling. Teachers and students alike are becoming increasingly literate in the use of computers to accomplish a variety of tasks, to communicate and to access information. Because this technology is dictating much of what goes on in schools, it is having a profound impact on the school culture. The computer revolution is happening so rapidly that one of the new challenges facing education decision-makers is to ensure that the technology will serve the purpose of education. This challenge takes on a new twist in schools offering immersion programs where administrators and teachers have to ask the question: How can communication and information technologies contribute to an effective immersion school culture?

In order to answer this question, a number of related issues must be addressed:

- the availability of appropriate software in the French language,
- offering instruction on computer use and providing assistance in French,
- the identification, evaluation and sharing of French language web sites,
- the use of computers as a learning tool for subjects taught in French,
- the use of computers for distance learning in French,
- the establishment of networks to encourage students to communicate in French with students across the province, across Canada and around the world,
- the use of computers to deliver in-service activities for teachers.

## Fine Arts and Physical Education in a School Offering an Immersion Program

Although music, art, drama and physical education are widely viewed as options and are excluded from Alberta Education's achievement and diploma testing programs, they play an invaluable role in the education of all children. Because of their very nature, these optional subjects cater to children's multiple intelligences and are responsive to different learning styles. In fact, the better informed core subject area teachers are borrowing freely from the pedagogy in these optional subject areas. By integrating movement, music, and art in the different subject areas, teachers are better able to respond to individual differences.

In a school offering a French immersion program, music, art, drama and physical education take on an even more important role. If one reflects on the role of the social environment on first language acquisition, it is easier to understand the importance of providing maximum exposure to the French language in a school offering an immersion program. Much of the English language learning in Alberta results from the constant exposure to television, radio, family activities, private lessons, team sports, etc. In French immersion, offering these optional courses in French can compensate somewhat for the powerful English language environment that supports the acquisition of the first language. These subject areas provide contexts that

approximate real life situations, where students can learn French vocabulary, idioms and structures without feeling obliged to concentrate on acquiring the language. Offering these subjects in French provides the exposure so necessary to the development of language spontaneity.

In addition to the cultural dimension, the music program offers many opportunities for students to absorb French vocabulary, idioms and structures almost effortlessly through songs. French folk songs will expose students to vocabulary that may not be included in themes covered in regular subject areas. For instance "les chansons de métiers" describe logging, hunting, farming, fishing, forging, going to the market, etc.

The drama class has the potential of becoming one of the most promising language learning settings. It provides opportunities for students to associate body language and French utterances, thereby making them more meaningful. When words, idioms and entire sentences are supported by facial expressions and actions, they are easier to interpret, recall and use. The drama class provides opportunities for the teacher to work on French pronunciation and intonation without appearing critical of the student's competence in French. Finally, the drama class could very well motivate students to switch to the French language television channels, thereby increasing the overall exposure to the French language

Offering art and physical education in French exposes students to much of the vocabulary that is necessary to talk about the world they live in. In art class, students are required to discuss abstract concepts in the French language. In physical education class, they are given opportunities to use everyday vocabulary and expressions in talking about equipment, facilities, training, sports, etc.

Aline Brault, Consultant, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Edmonton
Marcel Lavallée, Edmonton
Robert Martin, Assistant Principal, École Frère Antoine, Edmonton
Alain Nogue, Assistant Director, Language Services Branch, Alberta Education, Edmonton

## SESSION NOTES

# A French Immersion School Culture: The Foundation for Success

ALINE BRAULT, MARCEL LAVALLÉE, ROBERT MARTIN, AND ALAIN NOGUE

The following summary was prepared from notes taken during the session by a volunteer recorder, and from any other written records of the session as may have been kept on flip charts or work sheets. The summary was reviewed by the session presenters and printed with their agreement.

## Content Overview (Alain Nogue)

*(Questions, Answers and Implications)*

Q: How is French immersion schooling different from regular schooling?

A: Learning French while using it to negotiate, structure and communicate meaning in other subject areas is a primary focus of the teaching/learning process in an immersion program.

I: Because of its role in determining academic success, French language learning becomes a major priority.

Q: How is learning French in an immersion environment different from learning it in a French speaking community?

A: Forgetting for a moment what the learner learns, the major difference is in the context in which language learning occurs. Whereas family or community activities are natural and for the most part spontaneous with the language learning as a by-product, the school's context is artificially created and maintained for the purpose of learning the target language.

I: In the school environment, the context has to be nurtured and massaged to bring it to approximate a natural context as much as possible.

Q: What do we mean by a school culture?

A: The context in a school that impacts on learning. The context results from the dynamic interplay of the different elements that make up the learning environment. It determines much of the implicit curriculum in the school.

I: Stakeholders need to be aware of the interplay of the different elements that make up their school's culture. They also need to understand their role in creating and maintaining an effective school culture.

Q: What do we mean by an effective immersion school culture?

A: One that supports learning generally and French language learning specifically. One that contributes to the students' motivation to learn French and to learn in French. One that gives credibility to the immersion option.

I: Decision-makers need to realize that, because of the mandate of a school offering immersion, its culture should be different from that of a "regular" school.

Q: What needs to be done to create an effective immersion school culture?

A: It requires a clear understanding of what immersion is and what it is not. It requires a commitment on the part of the decision-makers. This commitment should be reflected in a clearly expressed mission statement for the school and should be evident in the schools' practices. For instance, exposing immersion students to activities specifically designed to create/bolster the immersion school culture should be a matter of policy. The enlightened French immersion administrator has to be able to respond to those who argue in favour of limiting French plays, films, concerts, etc. because such activities exclude the non-immersion students.

I. An effective immersion school culture is everyone's business.

## Immersion Culture Through Physical Education and the Arts (Aline Brault)

This presentation specifically dealt with how, at a classroom level, the non-core subjects are fundamental in creating a French immersion culture.

*Why is there a need to go beyond the core subjects?*

The child's mother tongue is constantly enriched at home by influences such as nursery rhymes, family outings, fishing, camping, television, radio, music lessons, dance lessons, movies, concerts, commercials signs, restaurant menus, and individual and teams sports to name but some.

There is no equivalent contribution to the acquisition of the French language. The schools can imitate the richness of the English environment to some extent by providing as many subjects as possible in French.

*Exactly how do the Arts and Physical Education help develop the child's French?*

These non-core subjects are invaluable in two ways.

A. They provide a **variety of learning situations** which develop the multiple intelligences and respect different learning styles.

Taking one at a time, it is interesting to note the scope of the learning situations each subject presents.

*Music*

- While a student is singing she is **using correct and—often very many—more-complex sentence structures, and richer vocabulary** than she would use in conversation.
- Children are very tolerant of **repeating** songs and games over and over, whereas they are unlikely to be repeating a **correct sentence** in conversation more than once.
- Students **utter far more French sentences** while singing than they would in a half-hour period in a classroom.
- **All students can be singing simultaneous** in French, so there is more practice time for the correct and rich vocabulary than in a regular class setting.

*Art*

- Because the creative process involves a high level of personal meaning, children will often relate to the event or object in French.
- There is a story of a child returning from Québec who recounted her experiences in English to her parents until she fell upon a toy she had made with her friends. Upon pulling the toy from her suitcase, she broke into French, talking to her toy with great emotion.

*Drama*

- Like music, drama affords the opportunity to express oneself in an excellent quality French. Memorized texts add the element of learning to use expression and proper spoken intonation.

*Physical Education*

- Attaching movement to language reinforces the learning for many students.
- The emotional element of team sports and personal goal setting can provide a deep sense of accomplishment which, when related to French, helps anchor the value of using the language.

B. These subjects expose students to a greater quantity of areas of language which will be referred to as the different **domains of language**.

Each of the subjects provides an opportunity to develop new areas of vocabulary as well as a technical or professional vocabulary.

*Music*

French folk music is incredibly rich in vocabulary.

- There are songs about working: logging, fishing, black-smithing, etc
- Students learn to sing descriptions of landscapes, events, and people, all of which expose them to excellent syntax.
- Music is also a direct source of history-related folklore which students often memorize.

Technical vocabulary such as the names of instruments, the elements of music, scores, conducting, expressions, phrasing, etc. are learned in English through private lessons and other contacts such as television and friends. In French they would most likely only be learned in a classroom setting.

*Art*

Art requires that students learn to express their personal opinion and tastes. The many specific phrases needed to accomplish this become very useful later when, as teenagers, students want to express their ideas and points of view.

The technical language of art depends on the projects and therefore will likely cover a broad spectrum of vocabulary over the years. Art would include discussion of medium, colour, shapes, composition, perspective, technique and representation.

*Drama*

Depending on the type of experience, students will learn to talk of improvisation rules, and develop a language of negotiation to accomplish putting on a play.

Technically, students learn the vocabulary of costuming, make-up, moods, scripts, and roles.

*Physical Education*

Drilling and cheering are both very repetitive and require very rich idiomatic expressions.

Learning to state rules and negotiate referee calls also teaches specific sentence structures.

Technically, all the sporting equipment, motions, positions, and plays provide students with the very common vocabulary necessary to carry on an informal conversation in any bilingual setting.

## What is the value of learning French?

Students will ultimately want to speak French if it is useful to them. While the core subjects provide vocabulary for a broad range of topics, these only become useful when they are used in expressing a student's ideas, opinions and feelings. Music, Drama, cheering and Art are all opportunities for students to learn the sentence structures that enable them to express themselves at an emotional level.

## Who is the greatest proponent of the value of French?

Just as Klein wanted to hear from parents about the cutbacks as opposed to listening to the teachers whom, he claimed, were too partisan, students are often very impressed by the teachers who value and promote French, but who do not teach French Language Arts per se. When the Math teacher or the Physical Education teacher thinks French is "cool" the message is very clear.

## What affects our long-term memory the most?

Emotions and relationships! When asked what they remember of their Grade 1 experience most adults relate an emotional anecdote or describe a personal relationship.

We need caring teachers who demonstrate their passion for French and who model a consistent use of it, regardless of the emotional circumstances. Who better than the teachers of the arts and Physical Education, who often have wonderful relationships with their students?

Many of the most precious things in our lives are things that cannot be measured. The creation of an immersion culture is such a thing in that it is immeasurable and achieved outside the core subjects. The French learned in this setting will likely outlive any formal tested knowledge. As an Hungarian once said; "We all studied Russian for years without much motivation, as it was the imposed language of our oppressors. I forgot everything, but for some reasons I still remember the songs."

## Information and Communication Technology (Robert Martin)

There are two types of curricula in French immersion schools:

- stated curriculum, Alberta Education
- hidden curriculum

Some factors that affect language acquisition:

- relevance
- confidence
- meaningful communication
- interest
- security
- interaction
- models
- exposure

In order for the student to succeed in such a unique program, the hidden curriculum must:

- demonstrate that the administration is convinced of the value of French immersion
- support teachers in every way possible in terms of resources
- demonstrate the implicit valuing of the language in all areas of the stated curriculum
- provide for cultural activities where the language can be reinforced

### *Communication and information technology*

By using the language acquisition principles previously mentioned, a number of arguments can be made for providing a French technology experience:

| | |
|---|---|
| Exposure: | hearing and reading relevant material in context and in French reinforces language learning |
| Meaningful Communication: | French is valued when all of the working tools are in French |
| Interest: | although English is the predominant language in technology, French is the second language of the Internet<br>it is a vibrant and developed language in the technology world. |
| Relevance: | learning French must be perceived to be pertinent by the learner |
| Security and Confidence: | computers contribute to student-differentiated learning<br>learning French is most effective in a safe and caring environment where |

risk-taking may be done without fear of ridicule
there is excellent French software that can assist differentiated learning

Interaction: learning French is most effective when a positive relationship is created between the outside world and the students' activities
in this way, interaction is accomplished in a meaningful context

Models: learning French is most effective if the learner is constantly exposed to the language in all domains

*Some obstacles:*

- perceived lack of available resources
- funding of resources
- English-only technicians
- districts that believe that having some programs in French is sufficient
- dual track schools
- teacher resistance

*Bridging the gap:*

In summary, to create an effective immersion school culture using technology, the school must:

- integrate French in all areas of learning
- link the stated and hidden curricula
- be convinced and endorse its value
- offer all resources in French
- realize that all obstacles can be overcome

## Role of the principal (Marcel Lavallée)

### *Planning*

- Institute a planning process and administrative procedures that are respectful of the needs in each program.
- Purpose of planning is to enhance accountability.
- Leading a dual track school is an excellent opportunity to put into practice the dynamics found in an officially bilingual and culturally diverse country.
- Planning to focus on the educational needs of each group of students.

### *Role*

- Not speaking French is not necessarily a reason for a hands-off approach by principals; principals are not helpless because they do not speak the language, just like they are not helpless in a senior high school with many specialties, just like they are not helpless in a school that may have programs for special needs students; a hands-off approach is not so much a result of a lack of training or expertise in a specialized area as it is a manifestation of his or her personal attitude towards a program.
- Provide facilitative leadership, formative evaluation of staff.
- Ensure that clear goals have been developed consensually by all representative groups.
- Encourage professional development: support attendance at conferences, subscriptions to *Vie Pédagogique*, membership in *Conseil Français*, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, Canadian Modern Language Review.
- Visit the classroom, observe the students, talk to them, find out what they can and cannot do, discuss their achievement and progress with the teacher.

### *School Councils*

- Provide opportunities for all parents to have significant input and involvement in the realization of the objectives of each program.
- Identify what they would like to see achieved in each program.

### *Conditions for success*

- Strong leadership by the principal and the school council.
- Recognition that there are common needs for all students and other needs specific to each program.
- Program-specific needs are identified and solutions found by parents and staff involved in the specific program; common needs are addressed by everyone.
- Recognition that each program is different, and that different activities, different measures are required to address program needs. When the specific needs and program goals are well identified and articulated, it becomes much easier to explain variances in approaches and decisions. What is good for one program might not necessarily be so for the other program.

- Important for all parents to feel that the objectives for the program their child attends are being fully met.
- School council would have representation from both programs.
- Good communication is a more valuable practice in most situations than formal policies, rules or meetings.

*External*

- Visible presence of the two programs when you enter the school.
- Attractive features of both programs, and details about each program are featured in the school's handbook and publicity.
- General feeling of respect for differences.
- Open communication about programs, and general understanding and acceptance of each program's needs and activities.
- Sharing of resources between programs (some resources could enrich the FSL [core French] program in a school; cross-program teaching especially at the secondary level).
- Communications could be made first in French, then in English.
- Both languages are commonly heard in the environment.
- French staff are free and welcome to speak French, with French speakers switching to English when necessary.

*Building a shared school culture in dual track schools (70%)*

- Establishing a shared school culture does not imply that schools should embrace a single culture or give up the identities of their individual programs; it implies that common goals, norms, beliefs and practices might arise amongst all the myriad sub-groups that exist in a dual track school. This result further develops positive relationships and better learning in these schools. and brings the French and English program participants together.

*Climate factors*

- Many factors are common to good schools: mutual respect, good interpersonal relationships, strong administration and staff, good communication, high expectations.
- Equality of programs and practices. Equity and excellence go hand in hand.
- Focus on nurturing the parts and having the parts become whole.
- Strong parental involvement.
- Leadership that deals well with the diversity. Need specific plans to deal with diversity. Harmonious relations, integration of programs and people will not occur spontaneously simply as a result of good intentions and good will.
- Institute practices that demonstrate equality of treatment and fairness.
- Tolerance for diversity, viewing subculture formation as natural as long as it is developed within the overall norms and goals of the school.

*Practices*

- Having students from all programs together in certain option courses (7 to 12).
- Communicate to the parents on a regular basis that the program is doing well.
- Believe that difficulties can be overcome. Collective confidence and belief in program is necessary.

*Leadership at the district level*

- Guidance and leadership must be provided at the district level to ensure team effort and a sense of purpose; otherwise, individual teachers' efforts are overwhelmed by a pervasive sense of isolation and aimlessness.
- Design workshops to help non-French speaking principals with how to evaluate their French immersion teachers; point out that there are many commonalities—good teaching is good teaching; linguistic expertise should be dealt with at the interview.
- Evaluation should look at not only process, what the teacher does, but also at the students' learning progress and achievements.
- Teachers should have a personal plan to maintain and enhance their proficiency as French language speakers and writers.
- Providing a complement of support services : special education and remedial programs.
- French curriculum leadership.
- Although most boards have few or no bilingual administrative staff, they act as if it were business as usual.
    - How does the school as an organization react and adapt to the introduction of French immersion?
        - Staffing and professional development
        - Program promotion
- Clear information regarding the intents of the board in program implementation.
- Policies and practices to monitor and improve the district's or school's immersion program.
- Administrative belief in the program
    - What are the policies re: admission to the program, transfers, staffing, provincial and federal funding, students with special needs, field trips, cultural exchanges?
    - How are board policies affecting the nature of the program, accessibility to it?

*Threats*

- That the immersion programs, once established, lose their strength of innovation, of enthusiasm,; need visionary educators, administrators and parents.

A lot of research in immersion has focussed on the cognitive aspects. The other areas have received little attention.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator

WAYNE HAMPTON

I'd like to thank the conference organizers for the opportunity to share with you this afternoon.

I don't think I have anything very earth shattering to share. I'm sure many of the things I'm going to say you will have heard. What I'd like to do in my ten minute time is to begin with an overview of the demographics of our French immersion program in Lacombe, because it is a small rural program. Then, I would like to talk about: my belief system in terms of my role as an administrator of a dual track school; some best practices that have worked for us; and some issues and challenges that have arisen with the French immersion program, and how we have dealt with them.

The French immersion program in Lacombe is in its fourteenth year of operation. We had our first Grade 12 graduates last year. There were nine students in the graduating class and approximately 235 students in our K to 12 French immersion program.

Our school structure in the town of Lacombe is probably the most bizarre in the whole world, and I think it is important that you have an appreciation of that. But it does work very well in spite of sounding somewhat bizarre.

We have a Kindergarten to Grade 2 dual track school with 463 students. Of these, 82 are in French immersion. In a second building, my building, we have grades 3 to 6 with 400 students, 83 in French immersion. Then, in the junior high building we have 535 students—and since we have experienced the same trend as many other French immersion programs throughout Alberta and across the country—about 35 of those students are enrolled in French immersion. So, you can appreciate how, in a school of 535, the immersion program is small in terms of the number of students, but it is very important in our hearts, and we are committed to it. In high school there are approximately 750 students, with about 30 in French immersion. I am sure you can see some challenges there at the secondary level. In my building, we have split four–five and five–six classes, and of course there are split classes in the junior and senior high as well.

I've been intimately involved with the French immersion program the past nine years as an administrator and the past seven years as a parent.

To explain my belief system. The beliefs I'm going to share with you this afternoon are fundamental and apply whether you have a single track English or single track French school, or a dual track school. Many of the ideas and best practices I will share dovetail very nicely with the session yesterday on creating a school culture for French immersion programming. I think it is really important for us as administrators—and please understand I have absolutely no fluency in the language, except my high school French. My daughters in grades 6 and 4 make a great deal of fun of me and we have a great time at supper, when I start to speak French. If you want your children to start speaking French simply say, "You know you could be saying a lot about Mom and Dad

right now, and we wouldn't even understand:" that really gets them rolling. We have lots of fun with that, and when I try to use my French, too, it is pretty brutalizing to the language, let me tell you. But I believe that as administrators it is not enough to simply tolerate a program. I think we have to be intimately involved in it. We can't let the teachers fend for themselves. This is probably true in English or French, whether it is French immersion, special needs resource, or whatever. But probably because some of us don't have a fluency in the language, there might be a tendency to say, "Well, we'll hope that the teachers can make it fly." I don't think that is sufficient. As an administrator, I believe we have to be actively engaged in all aspects of the program to ensure that the program, the students, and the school fair well. Even if we don't have fluency in the language, we need to be intimately involved in the day-to-day and long-term planning and operation of the program. As administrators, we must guide and be directly involved in all the aspects of the program. Passivity is just not good enough.

We also need to be sensitive at all times to the complex political realities and implications of French immersion. Especially if you come from central Alberta—I know it is not unique to central Alberta, but probably true for many communities across our province—being sensitive to those political realities is very important. If we are not, it may easily lead to conflict in both the internal and the external school environment. We need to be seen as actively supporting all programs: English, French immersion, etc, etc. We need to be supporting the programming, the planning and the activities that go with it. The bottom line is that we need to be seen as very proactive with all programs.

A good example: seven years ago our numbers were falling a bit and in my school we had 16 students in the Grade 6 French immersion class but we had six English classes, one of them with 34 students. You know what happens when situations like that arise. We had to move towards split grades. It is very important that staffing be seen as fair and equitable across the board. We had discussions with parents and we demonstrated to them how split classes could be very successful. We went with split classes the following year, and they have, indeed, been very successful.

We need to be open and accountable. There is a perception that French immersion programs and students get substantially more funding than all the other programs. I dealt with that often seven or eight years ago. I don't deal with it anymore, because I think with the move towards site-based decision-making parents see exactly what the funding is. Yes, in our situation we get $91 per student for French immersion, so it is an extra $7,000 for our budget. But it is not a significant amount. Parents need to see and understand that. I had a parent recently speak to me about funding and she was really embarrassed when she found out my own children were in French immersion. I said, "That is no problem. I'm glad that you asked and I'm glad that you brought it forth." So being open and accountable is really critical.

Also, when we do activities in our school for the French immersion program that we are very proud of, we go out of our way to try to include the English program students and staff. For example, we include the English students in cultural activities such as our *Cabane á sucre*, or any cultural performances that we feel that the English students will be able to get the gist of, and enjoy. If the activity involves a lot of language, which many of them do, it's not fair to include the English students because they won't understand what is going on, and will just become restless.

In the last few months we had an issue to deal with, and we dealt with it as we do in all instances in our school: as a team. In September, each of our two split classes had an enrolment of 28 students. We met as a French immersion team, discussed it, and decided to just leave it and see what unfolded. We got a couple more students and it pushed both classes to 29. We sat down and discussed it once again. We were very fortunate to be able to do this; we were in a position to hire a .2 full time equivalent French immersion teacher, who now comes in one hour a day to teach the Grade 5 students. This extra help gives the grades 4 and 6 teachers one hour each day to be alone with the grades 4 and 6 students. We felt that was the best solution in view of the circumstances. I think it is really going to help everybody: staff and students. Parents were also very, very pleased that we were proactive. We do the same thing in the English program, if we find that there is a situation arising where we need to address staffing: we work as a team.

In our school, we have dual signage throughout. When you walk into our school you will see "welcome" in both French and English. You'll see our mission statement in a very large frame in French and English. Our team and care models are displayed in French and English. Every room in the school—computer room, library, etc.—has both French and English mission statements on display. I think this dual signage sends a really important message. I never have to deal with complaints, if you can call them complaints, from English parents saying, "What is this nonsense about having to have French language on the signs?" I think it is actually appreciated, now that we have done it. The only place in the school we don't have dual signage is on the front of the building, which believe me, is a really big political issue. I tried to get dual signage on the front last year but it didn't work out. Another thing that we do at least once per week is to play "Oh Canada" in French, on the basis that French immersion makes up 20% of the school.

We do not counsel students out of the program. Now, let me just expand on that a touch. We have, on occasion, counselled some students out. As recently as three weeks ago, we had a student tested. This is a frustration I sometimes feel when, if your central office doesn't have a person who is experienced with immersion, which is our case—I'm not criticizing, that is just a reality—there tends to be a knee-jerk reaction to move the child into the English program. In my mind, and I think that the research supports me, that is the wrong thing to do. You also create a certain degree of animosity in the English program and hear comments such as, "They can't succeed in the French program, so let's dump them into the English program." With the student we had tested recently, we sat down with the parents and teacher, and set out a plan about how we were going to address this student's needs right in the French immersion program. The only time we don't make an effort to avoid having the child leave the program is when a parent comes in and says, "I want to take my child out of the program." I will always ask them what their reason is and if there a problem, but sometimes parents just don't feel comfortable. We have had that happen on occasion, but not often. Our attrition from Kindergarten to Grade 7 is largely caused by families moving away. In our mobile society, families are moving away and we don't gain as many children in French immersion as in the English program. For the most part, our attrition in our programs is not caused by "dropouts," although there may be a few more in junior or senior high.

Something else that is highly valued and very important, which I've alluded to earlier, is the teaming. We have umpteen teams throughout our school: grade level teams, program teams, French immersion teams. I believe that the strength of a team comes from its diversity; the success of a team comes from its ability to work together.

We need to maximize the involvement and inclusion of all stakeholder groups whenever and wherever possible: staff, parents and even students. At Lacombe Upper Elementary, our teams are very abundant—technology team, budget team, physical education program teams, on and on and on. Because of my lack of fluency in the French language, in our school one of the French immersion teachers acts as a liaison, and communicates a lot of information to the French immersion team of three teachers and one French speaking teacher assistant. We have French immersion program meetings, which I chair, and they are in English. I think it is very important that that type of support be demonstrated. We have an ongoing dialogue; we schedule formal meetings throughout the year, but we do have an ongoing dialogue. Also, because of the fragmentation of our program in the town of Lacombe, we have a K to12 French immersion team that meets monthly or bi-monthly. Normally all the teachers attend, and as many of the administrators as possible. I try to attend them all. The purpose of those meetings is to create a dialogue: talk about how things are going, plan in-services, and plan our cultural activities (particularly *Cabane á sucre*).

Supporting and working with the Canadian Parents for French local chapter is also critical. CPF is a wonderful vehicle for program promotion. I really believe that potential French immersion parents need to hear it from parents who have experience with the program. They don't want to hear it from educators, because the teacher does not know the parent's perspective. Even mine, although I am an immersion parent, is not the perspective they need. They want to hear from a non-educator who has placed their child in the program.

Our CPF chapter has had an interesting history. It was originally created when the program started 14 years ago. It was a very powerful group—the lead group and wonderful parents. However, they just couldn't agree on things, so the chapter folded. We revived it last year because the parents expressed an interest in it. Our motto is "we are going to go slow to go fast." I think it is going to work wonderfully.

I think the most powerful thing CPF did last year was to have the chapter President attend the ECS parent information meeting in May. She talked about the French immersion program, and what it is like to have a child, or two children, in French immersion. As a result, we had ten students move from English ECS into French immersion Grade 1. Now, that does create some problems, because there is no doubt their level of French is going to be lower than the level of the children who experienced the French immersion ECS program. Parents were anxious, too. I had many parents express concerns about having made the right choice. We all have self-doubts. We need to do as good a job as possible of communicating that, in time, the child will do wonderfully.

Another thing that we've done has been to take advantage of the French monitor program. We had a French monitor for three years. We weren't approved for one this year, but we hope to be again in the future. The French monitor is wonderful for bringing additional French cultural experiences to the students. We also used that person in the English programs to try to instil a better understanding and knowledge of the French culture.

Resource room assistance is another issue that comes up with small programs, particularly because we don't have the money to hire resource teachers. Our program at one time had a .5 FTE resource teacher, then it was reduced to .3. When we went to site-based decision-making, we sat down, talked about it, and to decided to delete the position. Instead we hired a full time French speaking assistant, which has been a true success story. I mean that so sincerely. We use that

person to work with every single Grade 3 and Grade 4 student on a weekly basis. She takes every child for about 15 minutes to work on their French Language Arts reading. In grades 5 and 6 her focus still tends to be on French Language Arts, but if a student is having difficulties in Math, she'll work on that. As an administrator, I get really upset when we have teachers' aides doing bulletin board displays and things like that. I believe we should maximize the time with the students.

We also implemented a home reading program, which is a must for Grade 3s, Grade 4s and some of the Grade 5s. As part of the Teacher Assistant Program, the Teacher Assistant assigns students a certain reading to practice four times over the course of the next week, before she sees them again. It is wonderful! Our daughter gets out the books and reads to us. Of course, I never try and correct her, because I don't have any fluency. I don't want to get her going in the wrong direction. But she is reading French very, very successfully.

I believe that the enhancement of French immersion in Alberta lies with our ability to create a strong network of all the stakeholders involved. If we can work together as a team, communicate and share ideas and frustrations, I think we will be very successful. Our program is a real success, but there certainly are some challenges. And attrition is probably the biggest one right now.

Thank you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator

**Emilie Keane**

Thank you all for the opportunity of addressing you this afternoon and of sharing with you the way St. Albert provides programs for our French immersion students.

Our program is approaching its twentieth anniversary in the spring and we were looking forward to that celebration. I'm in a grades 7 through 12 school. We will be graduating our eighth class in the spring and we are very excited about that. I'm going to speak about the St. Albert Catholic experience rather than the experience of Greater St. Albert, our district after amalgamation, because the two experiences are different.

In St. Albert Catholic, French immersion classes were organized within French immersion centres, or single track schools. We have two elementary K to 6 schools and one junior/senior high, 7 to 12 school in our district in St. Albert. Mine is the junior/senior high school, Sainte Marguerite d'Youville. Twenty-five percent of our division's total student population is enrolled in French immersion in St. Albert Catholic, and we are very proud of that. But it hasn't come without a lot of hard work, and some creativity and innovation on the part of our schools and our division.

When French immersion programs were initiated some twenty years ago, the federal political climate promoted being bilingual in terms of opportunities for employment and advantages it would give students. More recently, we have seen a change in that political movement, and certainly a decrease in federal funding and the political importance given to bilingualism. So promotion has become something that we have worked on ourselves.

We have worked hard at promoting our programs with the message that being bilingual is an important advantage for students. We started at the elementary level, encouraging as many students as possible to begin French immersion at Kindergarten or Grade 1. We educated parents about the long-range possibilities of French immersion. Being able to see an entire program from K to12 available within a community gave parents in our district a sense of confidence in its future. And, at Kindergarten registration evenings, some graduates from our high school, and even some of junior high students, have been invited to address parents on the advantages they have been given by staying in the French immersion program.

Our goal is to encourage students to stay in the program all the way through, once they register for Kindergarten. We know that doesn't always happen, but it has certainly been our experience in St. Albert Catholic that they stay to Grade 10. Our attrition rate at Grade 7 is almost non-existent. We keep almost 100% of our students. When we lose them is Grade 10, because then they leave for social reasons, thinking the grass is greener on the other side: "A big high school will surely provide me with greater opportunities for program choice, more friends, better athletic opportunities...." and a variety of other, similar reasons. Interestingly enough, in the last month I've had three of those students come to me and say, "Can I come back? I don't like the big school." There are some advantages to small schools. We generally keep 50% to 65% of our junior high students for high school.

We promote our grades 7 to 12 program on just that basis: the small school advantage. We have only 436 students in those grades, so we promote the facts that they have more teacher attention and that we have a strong academic program. We look at the things that we can provide. We work hard to be competitive in all aspects.

Technology is a big thing today and in some of the big schools technology is, of course, given a very high priority, so if we don't give it equal priority in our schools certainly we lose our students. So we've become creative. Last year we implemented a dual platform technology system within our school. We run both Macintosh and IBM— two separate labs all networked. That was quite a challenge.

Because our school is a French immersion centre, one focus of our program has been the opportunities for students to develop oral language. We expect that when you come to our school, when you come to the front office, when you come to the library, and when you address a teacher in the halls and the classrooms, you will use French. Most of our staff are Francophones. We hope that through this focus on using French, our students will develop a higher level of competency in French.

One good practice you may want to look at is formally assessing oral French. We've had various competitions where students participate in oratorical contests. We took away the contest part and for every reporting period students must give their teacher a tape of their oratorical skills. They can choose any topic they want. We use tapes instead of speaking in front of a group because we want to take away any shyness or nervousness. We want our students to strut their stuff so to speak. The students, with their Language Arts teachers, have devised a rubric for evaluation, so they know exactly what they are being assessed on. They know what kind of content is being graded, how we mark diction, pronunciation, masculine and feminine accord, and they know what to include in their presentation. We also do fun things like having them present their favourite sport or their favourite recipes in class demonstrations. These presentations have been very popular with the students—anything that helps them to speak.

In our school, because we are single track, it has been easier for us to promote the philosophy of French immersion—to have a unique mission statement that our staff and our parents follow. We have spent a great deal of time and effort to educate our parents about French immersion. At our orientation evenings we take the opportunities with a crowd of parents there to talk about how students learn in French immersion, so that the myths and their fears about immersion education can be removed. We tell them, for example, that learning a science concept—because, of course, Science and Math are the areas at the secondary level where the parents are often most leery—is the same in French and English. The language of instruction doesn't matter. We help parents to realize that students leave our program after Grade 12 with the same knowledge base as an English program student and that they can go on to an English or a French university program with the advantage of having the bilingual opportunities available to them. We bring back our graduates from universities, NAIT or SAIT, Grant MacEwan College and other programs to talk to our parents and to our students about their experiences. We ask them to be honest. They are, and usually in a positive way.

We put aside a healthy budget for promotion, and we advertise in the papers, send letters home to parents, etc. Sharing information is vital. People don't want to be a part of something that they are not fully aware of, or informed about.

In Grade 9, one of the things that we've tried to do to increase the number of students who stay for high school in Grade 10 has been meeting with individual students in Grade 9 to help them plan their programs. We are very direct with students who could be good students at the high school level in French immersion, who could be strong academic students: "You should really consider staying here. This is a good program for you. You would do well here." We tell them that because sometimes if they don't hear it, they don't think about it. Then, if a friend decides to go to another school, off they go. So we tell them that they should be staying. The other thing that we do is to look for those student leaders who, if they stayed, would entice other students to stay. We do active promotion and, I'm not ashamed to say, it does work. We have kept more of our students. We've also surveyed our students, to find out what kinds of things they want in high school, and what it is we don't have that they would like to see. Most often, the only thing that we can't give them is a larger student body.

We run a full French immersion high school program. Our high school population is about 128 students, or five classes. We teach only English Language Arts in English. All of our sciences and maths are taught in French. Because we want to be able to offer a spectrum of courses to both those students who are a little less academic and those who are more academic, we've had to put our creative juices to work. We hired a part-time teacher (.25 FTE) whose job it is to offer distance learning programs to students. That teacher's role is to monitor and follow their progress, to make sure that students who begin a correspondence program follow through and finish it. As well, she offers instructional assistance to students. So in classes or in grades where we don't have enough students to offer a Math 23 course but we have students who could use that, we do it through our distance learning program. For some of our gifted students it offers some flexibility, too. We have students who are taking psychology and a variety of marketing and economic courses that they are enjoying and would not have access to in most schools.

I was asked specifically to address what we do in our school for learning resources for those students who have learning difficulties. We do have a variety of students with learning problems. Because we have been keeping 100% of our students right from elementary, we have a broad spectrum of students. We have a student this year in Grade 12 who has autism. He is going to graduate in the top three percent of his class. We have another student in Grade 11 who has obsessive-compulsive behaviour and organizational and fine-motor problems to the point where he must use the computer because you can't read his handwriting. We have another student in junior high with Tourette syndrome. Those are the more severe cases. We have varying degrees of problems, from students who have temporary learning problems because they've missed one concept in math to those with long-term problems in reading comprehension, or math, or the like.

So, again, we have a part-time teacher (.25 FTE) to coordinate the individual program plans (IPPs) for these students, to work with classroom teachers to develop the IPPs, and then to provide a variety of strategies for both the students and the teachers. We have grade level meetings on a regular basis. At these team meetings we look at the students who are having problems and develop different strategies that we can try as a team. Our students move from teacher to teacher for each of their courses because we hire subject specialists, so it is not unusual for a student in

Grade 7 to have seven or eight teachers. If, as a team, we can approach their educational programs with a consensus and with similar teaching strategies, we're more likely to be successful.

The other thing that we do is meet with the students and their parents, and try to teach them metacognitive approaches. Students, I believe, need to know that they have learning problems in some areas and they need to know how to address them directly. You can't hide the difficulties under the carpet; if you do, you are not going to be successful in addressing them. If students can't address their difficulties themselves, they're going to have problems later in life, especially those students who have confirmed learning disabilities. We have a teacher aide as well, who works with that team.

We've become more adept at identifying the needs of students, but sometimes we do ask or recommend that a student leave our program. Occasionally we have tested a student and found that their lack of success in the program is due, in fact, to a language disability. It is very difficult, in a secondary program, if a student has a language disability to offer the level of remediation that would be necessary to make them successful. In addition, I think that when students through junior high/senior high are having learning difficulties, their personal level of stress, their self-esteem, is more fragile because they are teens and going through hormonal changes. I think that we have to be very conscientious about the decision we help them make. Sometimes the recommendation to go to a program where there is only one language reduces the student's stress so that they can be successful. In the end, every decision we make for a child's program has to help them be successful. It has to help them stay intact as a person; this is very important.

We also provide a program for gifted students. We've done the regular identification through intelligence testing. The teacher responsible for the IPPs is also responsible for what we call the EPPs or Enrichment Program Plans. She also maintains a system where she provides resources and possible activities for teachers in the classrooms, so that they can coordinate their subject area and content with some possible resources and approach for the students. So we meet the needs of our gifted students as much as possible within the classroom, with opportunities for them to come together occasionally for special activities.

We also use a lot of assessment tools. Assessment has been a focus of our school division for the last few years, and we have become very cognizant of the fact that our French immersion students do well on Provincial Achievement Tests and on Diploma Exams—higher than the provincial level. We do brag and boast to our parents, but it is more important that they understand why these students do better. Because in explaining to them how language learning complements anything that they may be learning in terms of content, how it makes them better learners overall, we can give parents and students more confidence in the program, so that the students will stay, we hope, until the end of Grade 12.

One of the other things that we do in our school that has helped us in terms of program choice—because, as I said before, we are a small school and students want a lot of program choice—is to schedule several option courses all within a schedule block, so that students have a variety of courses that they can choose from within that period. Block scheduling enables students to have more choice and has worked well for us too. In addition, our French Language Arts teachers have initiated a program called "auto-correction," which means the students are self-correcting; we do it in English as well but more so in French because it is their second language.

The focus of auto-correction has been to help students improve their writing skills. Sometimes they don't take the time to review what they know about grammar, what they know about syntax, etc; they make careless mistakes. Auto-correction done on a regular basis helps them to be good writers more consistently.

One of the issues that I would like to mention is the fact that sometimes we have a difficulty at the secondary level finding specialized staff. Faculté is doing a good job educating teachers. But we may not have enough students going to Faculté, especially for the secondary level, to supply our needs for specialized teaching staff. Having the right staff is the key to having a successful program, but it is sometimes difficult to get them, and I would assume that it is much more difficult for outlying areas. In St. Albert, we probably have more ready access to young teachers than you would have in other places.

Thank you.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

# Building the Future: The Role of the School Administrator

**Donna Waraksa**

Good Afternoon.

Do you know how difficult it is to follow two people who are so excited about their schools and not to be able to talk about yours? I have been asked to talk about something other than my school: our system-wide French immersion principals group.

I'd like to begin with a bit of history about this group of principals in Calgary. In the early '70s, when the French immersion program began in the Calgary Public system, the supervisor of second languages was Dan Davies. The first principal of the first French immersion school, which was housed in the McDougall Centre downtown, was Budge Burrows; Budge retired two years ago. I imagine that the early meetings were probably pretty informal: Dan and Budge sitting there talking about the issues of French immersion in Calgary. But before long the program grew, and grew, and grew. Soon there were many schools offering the program and more central office support; at one time, we had a team of about five people and a secretary.

Then the principals of all the schools offering the program began meeting. These meetings helped to respond to the special issues and needs of these principals as they supervised their French immersion programs. Some of them were French speaking and some of them weren't, so the meetings were always held in English. The meetings were called and run by the second languages team at that time.

Now I am going to show you some contrasts between how this group worked thirty years ago and how it works today. I interviewed a friend who was one of the early consultants. Her name is Elizabeth Bourges and she is still a teacher in Andrew Davison Elementary School in Calgary. She identified some of the issues that would have hit the agenda at the principals' meetings: registrations with overnight line ups and enrolments accepted on a first-come, first-served basis; busing costs; and opening of new centres.

I found it interesting because it was the opposite of the situation with which we are faced today: attrition. There were people just bounding forth and coming into these programs. What would we do with all these students? We were spending time then identifying schools with space available for these programs. We were also meeting with school communities and promoting the program. That part hasn't changed.

Budget was a big thing then as it is now, but instead of a lack, there was lots of money to spend; the discussion was how to spend it. Selecting and distributing resources, providing professional development for teachers, and knowing when to lend assistance to teachers were some other issues of the day. There was a lot of need for personal assistance to teachers who had come from Quebec and didn't speak a word of English: helping them through the cultural shock, sometimes helping them find housing, encouraging them to network with the other teachers, and familiarizing them with the Alberta curriculum expectations. Just finding French speaking teachers

was a huge issue then. I can remember, even at the time that I was a consultant, the supervisor would fly to Quebec to interview and hire teachers.

Another issue was accountability. I think that will always be on the agenda. The supervisor at the time made many presentations to the board of trustees and senior administration, explaining and reporting on the program. I can remember we used to do immersion weekends for French administrators out at Rafter Six Ranch, and other places where the team would go and help administrators to learn some French and just feel connected to their program. The program wasn't really seen as a regular program at the time. It was seen as an extra, a special program, like GATE (Gifted and Talented Education), maybe even a competing program. Now French immersion is a regular part of the system.

Also on the agenda of the principals' group of that time would have been the promotion of French immersion programs, the importance of second language learning, and ways of working with and responding to the needs of the parents—who were taking big risks themselves by putting their children in a program that hadn't been tried.

How does the agenda look today, all these years later? We still have the principals' group but we've changed our name to French Leadership Group to be more inclusive because sometimes it's the principal who comes, sometimes it's the assistant principal or vice principal or someone on staff who represents that school at the meeting. We also have a Francophone school in our system, so the principal of that school comes as well. We have our one remaining central office specialist attending our meetings. We also have attending one person who is responsible for the selection and evaluation of system resources for French. We have an open invitation to our staffing person from central office who assists with staffing French immersion programs. And we always have invited guests for special topics. These guests might include Alberta Education staff, senior administrators, the chairperson organizing *Le Conseil Français*'s conference, and so on.

Our meetings continue to be held on a monthly basis, but a sign of the times is that the Second Languages Team no longer provides lunch for us. We each dig into our pockets for the forty dollars, for the year, to pay for our lunches, and also to do some supportive things, like buying gifts for the members of our group.

What else is different? No longer is this group run by the Second Languages Team. Each year, we choose from among ourselves two or three people who will coordinate or chair the group. They share the role; they set the agenda, and send a draft by e-mail to everybody in the group so we can see whether we want items to be added. They invite agenda topics, facilitate the meeting, invite guests that pertain to the topics on the agenda, take the minutes and distribute the minutes. At times, depending on the issues, we set up *ad hoc* sub-committees to study an issue, perhaps write letters, and so on. Last year, for instance, we set up a sub-committee to draft a vision, mission, and purpose statement for our group. I didn't bring a copy of that so if anyone is interested you can ask me for that.

Sometimes we write letters. One we are writing right now is in response to a very negative article in a local newspaper. We also send a representative of our group to the French immersion liaison group set up by Canadian Parents for French in our city. It includes a senior administrator, a

trustee, two or three teachers, and a couple of principals. This group also discusses some of the same issues as our group.

Our French Leadership Group meets in a senior high school, so we don't have to pay for a meeting room. We start the meeting over lunch. We eat and chat, and then we start the business portion right at one o'clock, so that we have finished by the end of the day. The system is supporting us, as this is done on Board time. There aren't any costs involved, apart from that forty dollars that we dig out from our own pockets. So, if you want to do something like this in your district, there aren't a lot of costs.

Today, many of our issues are the same, many are not. Budget now is about how best we can spend our dwindling dollars, how we can obtain our resources, and what resources there are. The politics—we talk a lot about how much senior administration support we have. We talk about promoting our programs through staffing, and the preparation of future administrators for our schools. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find administrators who are French speaking and who are supportive of the programs; we are working hard on that. We compare our enrolments, and discuss trends like declining enrolments and attrition. We share information about *Le Conseil Français* and the monitor program. This fall we celebrated our 25th year of French immersion programs in Calgary. For all of us, this group means taking a lot of information back to our schools. We sometimes share professional development opportunities for teachers, articles, books, and papers, as well as information from conferences like this one.

In conclusion, I'd just like to say that this is a networking group that's supportive and collaborative, and we're trying at the same time to be very proactive.

Thank you.

# Creating English-French Immersion Harmony in Dual Track Schools
## Canadian Rockies District Task Force

ANITA WURST
SCHOOL COUNCIL CHAIR, LAWRENCE GRASSI MIDDLE SCHOOL (CANMORE), CANADIAN ROCKIES SD

DR. BILL BROWNLEE
DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, CANADIAN ROCKIES SD

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

**[ANITA WURST]**

I'd like to say how proud I am of the work this committee did in response to trying to address the many issues that arise from having a dual track school.

The division was very brave and pro-active to invite the stakeholders to become involved in this committee. The committee was composed of parents, staff and administration from both programs in hopes of educating one another on the needs and challenges facing each program. There were some myths and misunderstandings by both and a great need for all to realize how much one program impacts the other. There needed to be an understanding that although we offered two distinct programs our resources need to be shared equally for the benefit of our children.

**[DR. BILL BROWNLEE]**

We began our task force work by identifying the issues and our approach.

Equity of opportunity was of major concern to the committee as French immersion was seen to be getting special attention, giving those students an apparent advantage over the English program students. Specific issues were class sizes, field trips and other extra-curricular activities.

1. Identify issues
    1. Equity of opportunity:
        a. class sizes
        b. field trips
    2. Funding
    3. Special needs students
    4. Elitism
    5. Transfers and attrition
    6. Classroom location
    7. Myths and realities
    8. Communication

We examined the statistics and, while French immersion generally had smaller classes in the early years, recent class sizes were quite comparable. With regards to field trips, we sought the advice of a Calgary French immersion school and found that their extra-curricular activities were not put on by the program.

Funding. The issue here was a perception by English program parents that French immersion was receiving additional funding. While this was the case during the start up of the program to provide French language resources, at present these funds are placed in the instructional budget and are not isolated for French immersion in particular. Canadian Parents for French has

provided funds for additional French resources for both French immersion and the French as a second language program.

Special needs students. The concern with special needs students was the speed with which students were seen to be transferred to the English class, when problems were experienced. While there was no assistance provided for learning assistance in the early years of French immersion, recent resource personnel have introduced new guidelines and procedures. However, parents still need information and support.

Elitism. A teacher was accused of having told a parent the "smart students" enrolled in French immersion. When we investigated, it turned out that it wasn't the teacher, but perhaps a parent of one of the French immersion students, who made the comment. It was very difficult for us to address or deal with it, but it certainly made the rounds of the community with some effect.

Transfers and attrition were another problem. Enrolment in French immersion classes tended to drop off, as cohorts moved up through the grades. The Grade 9 class and the high school program were down to one group of students, so we weren't able to offer a full French immersion program. At that particular time, we could only offer two subjects in the high school program in French; the rest were taken in English. Many students were dropping out, and there is a certain amount of truth to that. They dropped out as they got older. The feeling seemed to be that they wanted to take their high school courses in English, because they felt that the instruction would not be there for chemistry, physics and so on. They preferred to enter the English program at that particular time.

The location of the classroom seems a small but important issue. In at least one of the schools, the French immersion classes were separated completely from the English classes. They were in different wings. There was no intermingling of the classrooms. That was seen as a problem. However, in that particular case the parents originally decided and were part of the decision to set the school up that way. Yet it was still seen as a problem.

Myths versus realities was another area that we had to address. There were a great many myths out there about what went on, how classes were conducted. What was the reality of the situation?

Finally, communication was an important issue. We heard many times that parents weren't fully informed of all the things that went on, that there wasn't enough contact.

Those were the concerns that we had to deal with and address through this committee. We undertook them one at a time. In all, we had eight meetings of this committee. We addressed each concern and obtain general agreement on whether or not it was a real issue. When we had addressed each of the issues, we decided what we would recommend to the board.

However, before we get into the recommendations, I want to mention that we identified, as we went along, a number of other issues. For one thing, FSL (core French) offerings within the three schools was an interesting phenomenon. There was certainly a feeling that FSL programs were not offering a viable program, a viable alternative to French immersion.

We offer French from Grade 1 through high school, but the time allotted is limited. For instance, we have three half-hours a week for FSL. The FSL teachers and the English parents

felt that this was not adequate. So it seemed to us that we also needed to be doing something with the FSL program.

1. FSL program
    a. Limitations of programs
    b. Timetable problems
    c. Focus
    d. Financial implications
    e. Entry points
    f. Need for specialists
2. Possibility of separate French immersion school
3. Desire for other languages
4. Reactions to French by a portion of the public

We started by looking at the limitations of the program, for example, what timetable problems arose. What we found was that FSL classes were being used as preparation time for the English teachers. It worked out very well that during those three half-hour periods, the French instructor would go in to relieve the English teacher, who would then have their prep time.

We also found that the time allotment required in different subjects in Alberta, as many of you know, are variable. For instance, if you have language arts, there's a range of items you can offer, but you must offer a minimum. Much of the extra time in a total timetable day, then, is taken up by things like extended time in language arts, math or some of the other core subjects. Increasing the time for FSL, then, was a tough problem to address. The response of the central administration: increasing the time for core French would require additional staff and, therefore, a larger budget. Our position as a committee was that, while they do not establish a firm amount of time for FSL, Alberta Learning does recommend some minimums. The committee simply recommended that the system meet those minimums. That problem with its financial implications is still with us.

Our FSL teachers were also concerned about entry points. They were finding, for instance, that their classes would have students who had been in the program since Grade 1 as well as students who began only in Grade 6. The high school teachers would find that there were some students who started French in junior high and others who were just wanting to start. So the entry points were a concern, and we made some recommendations that would eliminate some of these difficulties.

We were also concerned with the lack of specialists in the teaching of FSL. Occasionally in FSL, someone who wasn't a specialist was chosen to teach it. That had to be addressed.

Another issue that came out was the possibility of a separate French immersion school. Could we solve our problems by running a separate, single track school rather than a dual track school? However it turned out not to be feasible.

There was also an expressed desire for other languages. What about Spanish? What about Japanese? What role could our system play in the teaching of these languages? We concluded that we were too small to do it.

And, of course, there was the reaction to French by a portion of the public. There's no doubt we had to deal with that. Some of our public have an enmity towards anything French and part of our criticism came from there as well.

These were the kinds of issues that emerged. What we did, as I said before, was to examine each issue. We then had a look at another dual track school to see how they were doing and what they were doing: École Varsity Acres School in Calgary. This dual track school was running very well, very smoothly. Everyone was happy with it. Parents from the English program as well as French immersion parents were enamoured with the whole school and the way it ran. It was great for our people to have a look at it, to see a situation that went very, very well, to glean many ideas for use in addressing some of our issues.

We made several important observations. For instance, they mixed their classrooms. At Varsity Acres, the students were mixing all the time. If they went on field trips, everybody went. The odd time they specialized with just sending the French immersion classes or just the English classes, but for as many things as they possibly could they mixed them all together.

That was the basis for what we wanted to do. We wrote our report and made a number of recommendations. Before the report was released to the public, each of the dual track schools had a chance to respond. The superintendent also had a chance to respond.

The district administration hasn't agreed with every recommendation. The financial recommendation in particular was a concern to them. We believe there may be ways, other than an increased budget, to resolve the issues, but we haven't got to that point yet.

However, as a result of all this action, the noise appears to have died down. We seem to have quelled a lot of the enmity. Both sides are beginning to say, "Well, maybe that is the way it appeared. Maybe we needed to do something about it." And, "Yes, we are beginning to understand where the other side is coming from, what their complaints are, and maybe we can begin to address them."

It's our hope that the French immersion program will continue to prosper and grow and be an effective part of our school programs. There's no reason why not. We hope that the dialogue that has started, and by clarifying the facts and the myths, that we have a better understanding.

**Facilitator: Dr. Art Schwartz, University of Calgary**

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. Importance of harmony, respect, team work and collaboration between French immersion and English tracks, from the beginning and at every occasion which arises.

   Rationale: This would be the ideal state of affairs, in which suspicion and resentment within schools and school districts would have few chances to raise their heads.

2. Clear and open communication by French immersion and about French immersion is crucial in order to counter misperceptions.

   Rationale: This should be self-evident. The best way of making sure that non-French immersion interests do not become anti-French immersion interests is to be open about what we are doing and about the resources we consume in doing it.

3. The challenge is to sustain commitment in order to extend French immersion into the high school grades, with high achievement levels.

   Rationale: French immersion is now sufficiently widespread at the elementary levels to be a fact of life in Canadian education. While we cannot afford to become complacent about the presence and success of elementary French immersion, it nevertheless has a presence and momentum across the country which can be sustained without the same degree of effort it took to build it up and spread it out in the early years. It may now be time to shift resources to winning acceptance and penetration for French immersion at the secondary level.

# Understanding the French Immersion Teacher
# Implications for Training, Hiring, Supervising, and Supporting Your French Immersion Staff

Lise Mayne
Principal, Calgary Board of Education

Wayne Hampton
Principal, Wolf Creek SD

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

**[Lise Mayne]**

Good morning, everyone; it is my pleasure to be here.

While I am currently a school principal, I spent a year as a teacher recruitment consultant with the Calgary Board of Education as well as being involved in recruitment as a central-office Specialist for Second Languages.

In the Calgary Board of Education, recruiters do the central office work of screening the candidates and, at the school level, the principals do the next level of screening to find the appropriate staff for their schools. We feel that choosing their own staff is very important for the principals. Usually we have a team of people on-site to do the interviews. The principal, the assistant principal, and perhaps a teaching partner would be involved.

The principals began to express concern about the language proficiency of our interviewees. A person's own assessment of their language proficiency may be quite different from what is really expected in a French immersion classroom. We also had some people who would say, "Well, their French is good enough for Kindergarten." This concerned us, of course, because we feel that French needs to be of high quality through every level. At Kindergarten having an excellent model is crucial. We had to spend time explaining to colleagues not familiar with the program that the teacher is the only model of language, so their French needs to be of a very high quality.

We principals brainstormed the criteria that we should be looking for in teachers for the French immersion program. We looked at linguistic skills, second language teaching skills, and knowledge of second language practice. We looked at knowledge of culture, and not just francophone culture, because there are many forms of culture. It could be French culture in France; it could be a French culture in Alberta or Quebec. So we looked at knowledge of how French cultures fit with our culture in Alberta and in Calgary, particularly, because that's our area. Then we considered knowledge and beliefs about immersion.

I developed about ten questions that I would ask, besides the typical screening interview. In addition we also asked candidates to give us a written example of their writing, right on the spot. That was a criterion I put in place: that candidates not take the writing question home, look things up in the dictionary and then come back or fax it in. Some people found this quite

nerve wracking. I explained that we were not expecting perfection, but just getting an idea of how they would be writing in the classroom on a daily basis. A high level of proficiency in writing skills, I explained, was necessary for correcting the children's work. I found some people had good oral proficiency, but their writing skills were too weak.

As a recruitment consultant for the Calgary Board of Education, I was responsible for interviewing all French immersion candidates, K–12. When looking at what the teacher has to have to be a successful teacher in immersion, the following aspects would be necessary. French immersion teachers have to be able to provide realistic and meaningful tasks, have a good sense of culture and be able to provide that culture through songs and stories. They have to provide all strategies and objectives for language learning woven into all aspects of the curriculum, into all subjects.

The teachers we want at the CBE would understand that a student's self assessment is really important and that students need to be involved in looking for their own errors and correcting their own errors. Recent research on the French immersion process shows that some practices we have used for years are really not that sound. For instance, echoing back to the children is not the best way of correcting errors. It's more effective to do other things. So one of my questions was, "When a child makes errors, how would you go about correcting those errors?" Some candidates would respond by saying. "Well, I'd try a couple of times and if they didn't get it, I'd say it in English." What do they believe about French immersion? What do they understand about immersion? Through asking the kinds of questions that you know are important in second language learning, the responses will tell you a lot about the candidate's strategies.

Think about giving candidates scenarios. Give them examples of the kinds of things that may happen: "You're teaching a science lesson and the students just don't seem to be understanding that you're teaching a concept about aeronautics. What would you do?" They might reply, "Well, I might say it three times and if they didn't get it, I'd say it in English." They wouldn't say anything about vocabulary development or scaffolding. They might not give you any idea about all the pre-learning skills needed to understand the concept they are trying to teach. Also, the error correction strategies have to be emphasized. They have to understand that scaffolding is really important. That it is a second language teaching skill. They have to understand they are building on the base, asking the students what they know, what they see, even what the word avion means. The teachers have to understand that giving students a vocabulary base is really important.

A teacher said to me that the new math curriculum is so language rich and heavy that she believes it is more important now to start teaching the concepts in English. The reason it's language rich is that we are developing language. I asked, "If you're not going to use that language in French because it is too hard for them to understand, what do you need to do?" I explained that you need to go backwards and give them lots of experience. A concept such as "time" is hard for young learners to understand even in their first language. If you give them a worksheet to do with the words dîner, déjeuner, or petit déjeuner, without ever giving them any kind of experience, any kind of activity to help them understand what those words mean, it becomes even more complex.

Because the math program now is very language rich—that's one of the beauties of the program and it's really going to contribute to a lot more language development for our students—we have to be looking at the motivation of the teacher and the learner. The teacher has to believe in French immersion. There are teachers who believe that it's more like an FSL (core French) program. You have to scratch the surface and find out what they really believe about French immersion. What was their background? How did they learn a second language? What do they like about teaching a second language? What's exciting about it to them? What do they expect?

Some teachers who are native francophones, who come from a background where their own second language skills are not that strong, do have very high expectations of their students that may not be totally realistic. We have to help them understand what our culture is here. Explain where our students are coming from, and what they may expect. It is up to us to give them that background about our students and about our school. So when you, as an administrator who is not bilingual, go into the classroom to see how the students are learning, you can see that they are on task and that they seem to be engaging in French. You can see that they seem to be following what the teacher is saying and everything is going along fine. But you have to know the right questions to ask about what the expectations for language development are and how the objectives are assessed.

Wayne Hampton, Lise Mayne

Focus on linguistic skills development. Students become very fossilized in their errors, if they are not getting proper instruction in the language and that has to be done explicitly. Once our belief about French immersion was that to immerse them was enough. We believed that they would stop saying "Je suis fini", but they don't. There is much in French that needs to be taught explicitly. Ask teachers how they develop vocabulary. Look around the classroom. Where are the words posted? Kids need to be bathed in the vocabulary. In the Grade 1 classrooms that I have in my school right now it's just amazing. Words are everywhere and the students know where to look for them. The students' journals are full of really rich vocabulary.

You can ask the teacher to show you students' journals or other work, but how do you respond to written work? If you see a workbook or a journal full of red ink, is that a flag for you? The research says that correcting and correcting errors in red ink is not solving the problem. The students are not understanding what's happening and they continue to make the same errors. Teachers need to highlight the phrase being learned that week and work on that phrase only, not everything else under the sun, because learning this language is very complex and it takes time. This is an area for professional development.

Are the teachers pushing the students? Ask them that question. There's much research that says you need to push, you need to enhance. If they are teaching aeronautics, have they developed the vocabulary or are they speaking the equivalent of "baby talk" to the students?

Have they measured the vocabulary against, for instance, something like the provincial achievement tests, so that they know that the words they are teaching them are listed and that's the kind of vocabulary and level that they're expected to use?

Are your teachers providing authentic experiences for the students? Ask for an example of a field trip they've been on in French. Get an example of a guest speaker that they have had? What kind of films do they watch in class? Are all of the films English? If they say they can't find any films in French, offer to look into that with them. It's easier, obviously, to find the English speaker, the English field trip, or the English film, but you can find some things in French. You can find resources in French that can enhance the program.

How are parents involved? Some teachers don't believe that parents should come into the classroom, because it disrupts the learning or because they are only speaking English. But parents need to be involved. They can be our greatest advocates. They could be doing many things, even if they don't speak French. It's important to ask if parents are involved.

Are they communicating with the parents? Yesterday Judy Gibson spoke about that in her literacy presentation (please see "Literacy Development in a French Immersion Program", page 199). I think that it is really important. A teacher recently said to me, "How often do I have to say this to the parents? I said it back in September and October." Well, if it's now May and you're on a new unit, you do have to explain it again, because parents need that background and understanding about why you're doing this field trip or why you're doing the spelling program this way. As Judy said, you can feel very desperate as a parent, when you are at home and you receive a homework sheet all in French and you can't read it. You feel like you can't help your child. Then you start questioning if your child should be in French immersion. So the teacher has to be the key to keeping that communication open. That's how you'll keep your program vital. As we interview, we need to be asking questions that reveal how the teacher will be working with the parents to develop second language skills and a love of learning in French.

How are teachers using technology? Many excellent Web sites use French. As was said yesterday, French is the second most used language on the Internet. Students should be using those Web sites. Are they doing things in French on the computer?

These are the aspects that are really important as you recruit and support your French immersion teachers. Find a strong mentor in your school or in another school that's close by. It is really important for beginning teachers to work with that person to develop all these special skills and qualities. Support and opportunities for professional development are required to enhance the skills of teachers hired to work in the French immersion program.

**[Wayne Hampton]**

I want to address the recruitment process, the training process, and supporting French immersion teachers. A colleague from Red Deer, Doris Swensrude, should also be here today, but was unable to attend due to a family illness. As we are good friends who have worked together, I will cover her presentation as well. My comments are based on my involvement with a small rural K–12 French immersion program in Wolf Creek School Division in the town of Lacombe where I have been principal for the past 13 years. I will share my perceptions, observations, and experiences combined with Doris's involvement as a teacher in Red Deer.

When I think about the 11 teachers involved in our French immersion program, I realize we really haven't had to do much recruiting. We've enjoyed a high level of stability and retention. That has worked very well in our favour, as you can well appreciate. Of those 11 teachers, one has been with the program more than six years, two for more than ten years; four have been with us 3–4 years; three are in their second year, and one is new to the profession and to the program. Three of our teachers are graduates of French immersion programs (K to 12 and teacher education) in Alberta.

Probably the key variable, or one of the key variables, to retaining a teacher in the program is the sense of belonging to a community and being a member of the school. Certainly as a school we have a big role to play in creating that sense of belonging. One thing that we do in our school is teaming. I'll talk about that a bit later to give you some specific examples. Teaming gets people working together: you don't work in isolation; you feel like you are part of the whole with a desire to take on the ownership of the program and to stay with the program.

The idea of belonging and being a part of the school, the program and the community is really important. But the bottom line is, no matter the program, the primary goal of any recruiting process is to come up with the best candidate to do the job. Since we recruit on a team basis, the fact that I do not speak French is not a hindrance. My assistant principal has marginal French, and we always involve a lead teacher from our immersion program in the interviewing and selection process. Their primary role is to question the candidates to assess their language skills in French. We need good English skills too, because our French immersion people teach the English component, with formal introduction of English beginning at Grade 3. My assistant principal and I can assess their English skills quickly through the interview process etc., but the French immersion lead teacher's role is to help us out with their French language skills. We also have candidates do a written response to assess their writing skills.

The tendency, and this is just an observation, has been to hire anglophone French speaking teachers in our program, although we do have two francophones from Quebec who have been with the program a long time. The hiring of anglophones perhaps occurs because of the nature of our community and because these folks are involved in teaching the English language part of the program. It's an important consideration. Recruiting out of the province, which is not something that we've had to do so far, brings with it a certain feeling of temporariness by the candidate.

But, as the recruitment of French immersion teachers becomes more difficult, more out-of-province recruiting will be necessary and we're going to have to become a lot more creative in helping new teachers become an integral part of the community. Integrating is difficult if you have family elsewhere in Canada. You may think that you will go to Alberta for a year or two, but chances are you won't make a long term commitment. I think we're looking for people who can stay for a period. The real but longer-term solution is for our training institutions to attract the best students possible and to give them the best training, so that when they leave, they are committed to French immersion and have the skills and expertise necessary to allow them to be successful as French immersion teachers.

Based on my experiences with our programs over the last thirteen years, and as a parent with children in the French immersion program, I think the first thing that needs to happen

when we begin training teachers is to create a mind set. We need to create the mind set that when a student comes into French immersion that is the only option available to students. I see a tendency to move a student into the English program if they are not doing well. We want to avoid this unless it is absolutely necessary, especially in a small community like ours, where, in the town of Lacombe, only 10 percent of our 2,300–2,400 students are in French immersion. Nor do we want to create the perception that the English program is the dumping ground for students who are doing poorly in immersion.

Another observation that I've made over the years is that French immersion should be open to everyone. It is not for the elite. The parents in our communities who register their children in the French immersion program are generally of two categories. There are those parents who are well educated, very involved, very dedicated and committed to the best education possible for their child. And there are those who register their children because they are exceptionally gifted and the challenge of a second language program will be really good for them. That could be true, but it is often that child with whom the French immersion teacher experiences some frustrations. And it is usually in the form of behaviour problems. The tendency in our teacher training programs is to focus on the cognitive domain or academic excellence, but I'm not sure that teachers are well enough prepared to deal with the behaviour issues. So the French immersion teacher may let misbehaviour go for a while and then decide that this child might be better in the English program. Let's face it, the child's behaviour is not going to change because they move over to the English program. So I think it is important to keep that in mind when training teachers. The cognitive preparation is important, but teachers need to have skills, strategies and expertise in dealing with the affective domain, the social-emotional behaviour of these students. Because these children are generally very bright, they can learn the language but they can be disruptive to the rest of the class because they are not fully engaged. French immersion is not intended to be just for gifted students.

Other areas that I think our training institutions could be focussing on are greater inclusion strategies. Teachers need more training in how to deal with students who require resource or Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) support, because in small schools such as ours, we're not able to hire a resource teacher or special education teacher. Assistance must be provided in an inclusive way. However, I think we have been creative in that area. We have a 1.2 FTE LAC teacher in our English program; pro-rated based on the size of our French immersion program we are entitled to a .2 FTE teacher for resource/LAC-type assistance. We did that for one year, but found .2 FTE was relatively ineffective. So the immersion team recommended that rather than .2 FTE teacher we should hire a teacher assistant. We hired a French speaking teacher assistant who has been in our school for five years now and does an awesome job. Her focus is mainly with French language skills. She also works with them in English language skills at the Grade 3 level, because that's when English is formally introduced, but her primary focus is French reading and oral skills. She takes each Grade 3 student every week for about 15 minutes and reads with them. They also have a home reading program that she coordinates. This TA runs programs after school to help them in their language skills. This has been a real success and complements our program at a relatively low cost.

Another area that teacher-training institutions need to be sensitive to is the fact that most of these people are going to be teaching all of the subjects. There is no such thing as a math specialist and a science specialist. They teach everything, and in our case they teach the English

Language Arts too. We need to be sure they have the skills to handle all of that. Music is a really tough one for us because our music teacher—who is phenomenal—is English speaking, so the immersion teachers teach Music to the immersion students.

This is what teachers said when I asked for their opinion on what teacher training institutions need to address more fully:

- Greater opportunities to meet with and watch practising immersion teachers at all levels for learning about strategies for delivery, classroom management, how to encourage French in the classroom and so on.
- More familiarity with the curriculum and available resources was another issue.
- Having the time to walk through all curriculums and not just one or two.
- Strategies for inclusion and offering resource assistance support in the classroom setting.
- Greater knowledge and training in second language acquisition.
- Children's French literature courses.
- Enhanced training in acquisition of proper or correct French grammar and syntax. More strategies to help students with distinguishing between spoken and written French.
- More strategies to help the student master cultural aspects of the language such as idioms.

So those were some suggestions that teachers in our program said the training institutions should focus on to better prepare them to take on a French immersion job.

Our support strategies can't stop once the teacher joins our staffs; we need to support both the French immersion teacher and the French immersion program. We need do more than simply tolerate the program. It doesn't matter whether I or any other principal speaks French. We are there as a principal to support every program that we have, English or French. If a principal is not prepared to support a particular program, then we either need to get rid of the principal or get rid of the program; I hope it's get rid of the principal. Principals have to be actively engaged in all aspects of the program to ensure that the students and the school fare well. I mentioned earlier that I have no fluency in French, but that doesn't keep me from being intimately involved in the program. One thing that I do is have a lead teacher take responsibility for coordinating the immersion program along with me. The lead teacher makes sure that the immersion team has all the materials that come from Alberta Learning and so on. We have team meetings where I'm involved as the chairperson and they have team meetings where I'm not. It's important for me, for any principal, to understand that teaching French is different from teaching English as a first language, particularly in specific grammar. Teaching grammar in the French language is important and as an evaluator I may not realize that. If I go into an English language arts program and the teacher is spending a lot of time teaching grammar, I will probably get a little edgy and nervous and upset. To get around that, we've used a mentoring/peer coaching/teaming system. If we do get a new teacher on staff, I'm involved in the evaluation, but our mentor teacher is also involved in working with the teacher to make sure that they are approaching the language correctly and to keep me well informed on how the teacher is doing in that area—not behind the teacher's back but as a collaborative process.

As administrators, we have to be available for guidance and assistance, to be directly involved in the program at all times. We cannot afford to be passive and uninvolved. We do need to be models and risk-takers for our students, and this is probably an area where I fall

down. I'm very shy about trying to speak the language, because I'm a shy person. I'm very timid about my pronunciation and I know it is an area where I could do a better job of risk-taking because the kids would love to help me along. That's something that I'm going to focus on in the future.

We also need to be sensitive to the complex political implications of French immersion. For those of you who attended the session on the Canmore experience with dual track schools, with Bill Brownlee, yesterday, I think that we've done a marvellous job in that area. I've lived in the Lacombe area for almost 18 years. I remember some comments that were made in the community, when French immersion first started. In the 13 years I've been overseeing the program, I have never had a parent come in and say, "You just favour the French immersion program." I think we have been successful because we treat all programs as equally important. The French immersion parents appreciate everything we do for them, as do the English parents.

Similarly, when it comes to dealing with parents, I find that parents of French immersion students are more involved. But if their children weren't in French immersion, they would be just as involved. They tend to be the parents who are involved in your school council. This year is the first one in eight or ten years that half our school council executive is non-French immersion parents: two parents from the English program and two from the French program. Usually they are all from the French immersion program. That's never been a problem, because they've always been very sensitive that they are there to represent the whole school and whatever decisions we make impact the whole school, not just one program. So they've been very good about that. But we need to be there for the teachers, when parents get anxious, when Johnny's gone home and said, "The teacher's not teaching me the right French. My teacher doesn't know how to speak French, etc, etc." We have to be there to support the teachers.

We also need to be creative and sensitive to the challenges faced by a teacher teaching all the subjects. It can be a lot of work, and when you compound that with split grades, it becomes even more work.

We need to maximize the inclusion of immersion students in all school activities. Involving the children in school-wide activities, involving them in team activities and mixing up the French immersion students and the English students helps. Since we have such a small proportion of French immersion students, 90 out 450, segregating them would be easy. Designating a wing of the school as the French immersion wing would be easy. Nevertheless, we don't do that. They are mixed throughout the school—classrooms and school-wide activities. We need to be seen as always proactive.

Some key strategies that we employ to address these areas in our immersion program are what I call teaming, teaming, and more teaming. We need to be together as a team. I believe that the strength of a team comes from its diversity and the success of a team comes from its ability to work together. In order for a team to work together, we have to create opportunities for them to get together and do some work. In our school we have most teams with site-based decision-making. We have a budget team, a technology team, a phys. ed. team, program teams, grade level teams. That's one area where our rather bizarre grade form works to our advantage. We have 200 Grade 6 students in our school and at this time of the year, when achievement

tests are nearing, seven teachers have an opportunity to work together preparing their students for the achievement test, planning their programs and so on. So our teams are very important.

We have a French immersion team at our school, which meets two to four times per year. We also have a K–12 French immersion team that meets every two months. This year, as part of our school education plan focus, each team chose a program area to focus on to address what was provincial goal number one - excellence in learning. On staff meeting days, we dismiss at noon, have a very short business meeting at one o'clock, perhaps for half an hour or forty-five minutes, and then the teams get together. The French team gets together and they focus on their goal. You would not believe the dialogue it has created, the talk it has created about teaching and learning. We involve our teacher assistants in those meetings, too. We feel it is just as important though they're not the professional, not the trained person. They need to be involved in the team meetings.

Another program that we take advantage of is the French monitor program. We've had a series of them over the years. We involve them in the meetings, too. So we have the staff teaming. We have our program teaming. One of our French immersion teachers functions as a liaison or a lead person in passing on any of my thoughts or concerns. As well, we do meet periodically where I chair the meeting and we talk about our program. It's really successful. We have a very strong program. I think if you talk to anybody who has experienced our program or come to view it, they would agree that we have a really strong program. It's small but it's mighty.

Our K–12 team focuses more and more on professional development and less and less on planning specific activities such as cultural events. Mrs. Lutz, the assistant principal at J.S. McCormick with the K–1–2 program, coordinates the K - 12 team and she and I work together on it. At meetings when it gets to the PD part, we are welcome to stay, but the teachers speak in French. I think that is so important, to give our immersion people an opportunity to be together to use their French at an adult level, not just at their grade level.

Another key strategy for the success of our program and supporting the French immersion teacher is PD, PD and more PD. I am so proud of the opportunities that we give teachers and support staff in our school for PD experiences. Money is available. One of the concerns of our French immersion teachers, when I sought their opinion in another school, was that they didn't have any PD money to take in some of the PD for English program courses they teach. That isn't true in our school. Our teachers can take advantage of PD for French as well as for English. As an administrator, I'm committed to PD. We allocate about $750 per teacher for PD, which in my mind is generous. So money is available to support teachers' attendance at workshops, conferences, and inservices and any of our school education plan team goals, such as visiting other programs, etc., to cover sub costs. It's all there. We have always applied for the federal in-service grant in conjunction with Wild Rose School division. For next year, I am excited and pleased to say that Red Deer Public, Red Deer Separate, Wolf Creek and Wild Rose are going to submit a joint proposal. We'll probably get more money, which is fine, but the other beautiful thing about it is, it is going to get more French immersion teachers together on a more regular basis, to give them an opportunity to dialogue and attend in-services. That will be a very positive experience.

Other areas that our French immersion teachers suggested that we could do to support them as French immersion teachers, some of which we have control over and some we don't, include:

- Eliminating the curriculum lag. I know that's an Alberta Learning issue, but it is an issue that annoys people. The lag time is consistent. When we implement a new curriculum, French immersion's waiting for resources. Waiting and waiting. It is annoying. I think that's something that needs to be addressed, as well as ensuring that resources are available to teachers to teach the curriculum. We're struggling in some English programs, let alone some of our French.
- Bringing in French cultural performances. We do bring a number in over the course of the year.
- Buddying up new teachers. We do this in both English and French. Whether they're new to the profession or new to our school, I think it is important for them to have a mentor or somebody to turn to, somebody to whom they can say, "What do you do here? How can I get through this one?" The whole peer coaching and teaming concept works very well.
- Taking advantage of the French monitor program.
- Providing resource room assistance for French immersion students. That's a tough one, because of money. I would appreciate having a half-time teacher, and perhaps that's one disadvantage of not having our K-6 program under one roof and one principalship. Perhaps then we could have a half-time teacher.
- Engaging students and involving parents in a home reading program. That's been ongoing in our school and is appreciated by the parents and by the teachers.
- Working with and supporting our local CPF chapter. I have usually been the administrative liaison with our CPF chapter. It started up when the program started 15 years ago, and the first group of students who went through was a powerful group of students. I'm glad I had the chance to teach them. After a few years, the chapter folded because of internal disagreements they weren't making any headway. Two or three years ago, I suggested the reestablishment of a Lacombe CPF Chapter to some of the parents and there was interest. They've done very well since.
- Continued support of PD activities, continued support of teaming, maximizing opportunities for teachers to get together with other French immersion teachers (simply involves providing the cost of sub time). I don't mean it needs to happen regularly, because you need to be sensitive to the students' programs, but giving teachers a chance to get together to visit other programs, especially where we're at in a small program, is so important.
- More extensive early reading intervention. This was a concern that hasn't been expressed at our level.
- French resources for computers that are compatible with the Windows NT system. At the junior and senior high level, they felt that was seriously lacking. Of course, the Telus site provides a fair bit of material.
- Greater availability of French resources.

I'd like to conclude by saying: If a school is going to offer a French immersion program, support it the same way that you would support any other program. It's a wonderful program. I think that being principal in a school that's only an English program school would be mundane. A dual track school is so much richer and it is so much more fun. My daughters, who are in Grades 5 and 7, have had nothing but positive experiences.

French Immersion is an excellent program with an outstanding track record. We can be justifiably proud of the program's accomplishments since its inception some 30 years ago. It's a program open to all students; it is not elitist; it is not a program for the gifted but an opportunity to enrich the lives of Canadian children.

**Facilitator: Lise May**

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. Alberta Learning should provide some guidelines for hiring teachers in the immersion program which would serve all boards in the province. The universities and teachers should also be involved in establishing these guidelines.

   Rationale: Administrators lack information regarding the guidelines for hiring in the immersion program. Many of them do not speak French and they do not understand what is required of efficient immersion teachers. It would help to have a list of questions for use when interviewing teachers, with appropriate answers identified. At this point, it is up to every school board to determine the guidelines and many do not know what these guidelines should be.

2. More support is needed for teachers. Provide time in the calendar year for professional development. More support is needed for principals. Provide more workshops and more preparation to fulfill their role.

   Rationale: Many school boards feel very alone and therefore without any support to help the teachers and the administrators who are involved with the immersion program. This presents a major problem for the small school boards who feel very isolated and also forgotten. Alberta Learning has a very important role to play in organizing workshops for everyone involved.

3. To help staff the rural schools, encourage student teachers to do their practicums in smaller centres using subsidies as incentives.

   Rationale: Rural schools find it very difficult to encourage student teachers to do their practicums in rural centers. It would help if there were subsidies which could be used as an incentive to find these teachers. Presently, student teachers prefer to work in urban centers where more choices of schools are offered and where more job opportunities exist.

4. Have a university representative come and talk to Grade 12 students to encourage them to register in the education faculty. Also provide information on available help for those students, such as bursaries.

Rationale: Everyone agrees that we do not have enough immersion teachers to fill all the positions. The future is very bleak. We need to encourage our high school students to register in the education faculty. One of the ways would be to have a university representative (i.e. Faculté Saint-Jean) visit the schools and explain the several job opportunities that exist at the end of their studies. It seems that too many students do not go into education because of a lack of information.

5. Administrators should make it a point to support their immersion staff and to look after their welfare. They should be very sensitive to their special needs.

   Rationale: Administrators have a double challenge when they work in an immersion school. One of their many duties should be to make a point of supporting their staff and to look after their welfare. This would possibly encourage their teachers to remain in their school. Unfortunately, too many administrators forget to do so because they do not understand the very special heavy work load that their immersion staff face every day.

6. There should be a course offered at the university level that would talk more specifically about the difference between the French and English cultures.

   Rationale: Teachers and administrators do not always understand the difference between the French and the English cultures. The best way to solve this problem would be to offer a course that would explain these differences. At this point, we assume that people will get the information by themselves but it is not always the case.

# Appendix F

- Parnell, Rick. **"Marketing French Immersion in Alberta: A Conceptual Framework."** n.d. Unpublished.
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- Lundrigan, Suzanne, Pierrette Messier-Peet, and Carmen Mykula. **"Program Promotion: Generating Interest and Involvement."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future 1998—Conference Report.*
  Edmonton, November 19–20, 1998. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 1999.
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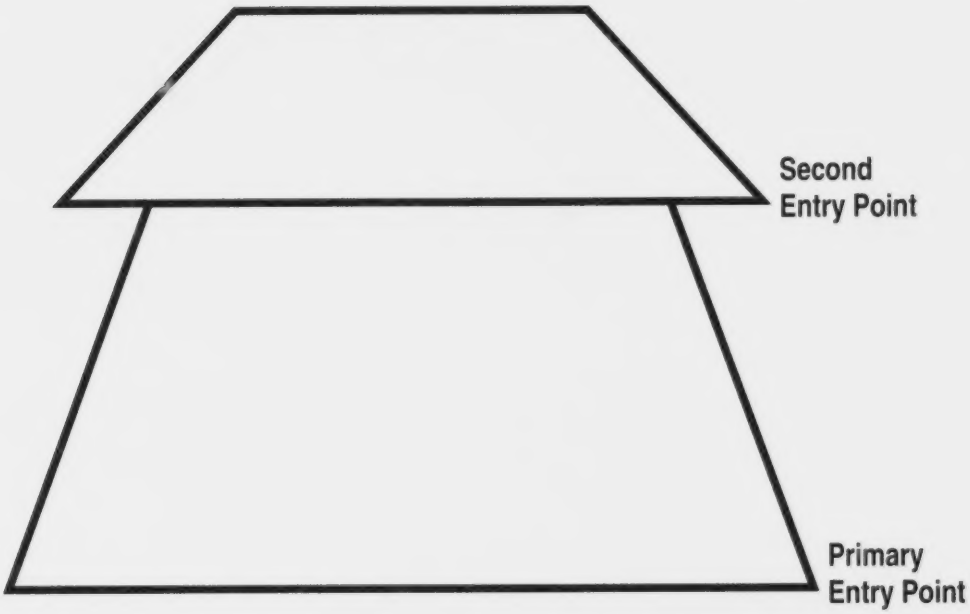
# Marketing French Immersion in Alberta: A Conceptual Framework

by

Rick Parnell M.B.A.

## Recruitment and Retention Profile For French Immersion Programs




The diagram above represents the pattern of enrolment in French immersion programs, up to and including Grade 9. In essence, there are two entry points for customers of French immersion. The first point is at the start of elementary school (*early immersion*), with the second point at the start of Junior High School (*late immersion*). Though there may be some activity in recruiting for preschool programs, recruitment strategies are focussed on these two main entry points. Once enrolment has been achieved, there tends to be a gradual attrition of enrolled students as students and their families opt out of the program during succeeding years. The reasons for this attrition are important determinants to the success of a particular immersion program.

In addition to the importance of recruitment, one of the key arguments I will make in this paper is, that for long-term success, the recognition of the critical importance of customer retention, and the true cost of each enrolment that is later lost must be addressed as part of an overall marketing strategy for French immersion.

## What is French Immersion, and who pays for it?

Federal Funding regulations recognize kindergarten and elementary programs that provide instruction in French for 75% of .the school day as being eligible for French Immersion grants. For Junior and Senior High schools the requirement drops to 60%. In Alberta, a French immersion program is often defined as one in which the French language is used as the language of instruction according to these percentages. French immersion programs (i.e. those meeting the Alberta guidelines) are available in approximately 160 schools in Alberta.

In addition to the French immersion grants, the funding framework for education in Alberta provides a basic amount for each student in the province, which is accessed by whichever public school the student attends. In addition to this basic grant, students also activate funding sources through initiatives such as Early Literacy funding, Special Needs, etc. In districts where all the funds available to individual French immer on programs are based on student numbers, there can be a considerable incentive for individual schools to attract and maintain a full capacity of students in order to ensure the highest returns through economies of scale. Of course, retention relies on the optimal mix of students and staff, both in terms of numbers and commitment.

In the 1998/99 school year, fewer than 27,000 students were enrolled in French immersion programs at all levels in Alberta, representing something in the neighborhood of 5% of the total available school population for that grade. The recruitment rate at the ECS level for French immersion has gradually dropped from 7.7% in 1992/93 to 6.6% in 1998/99. Grade 6 enrolment in 1997/98 was about 5% of the available school population for that grade level. Grade 7 enrollment in French immersion programs was also around 5% of the available school population in 1998/99 (suggesting that relatively the same percentage of the school population chooses to join late French immersion as choose to discontinue French immersion after Grade 6). The percentage of the Grade 9 school population still enrolled in French immersion as of 1998/99 was about 4.7%.

## The Market for Education

"Going to elementary school is the only activity that is compulsory in Canada. For that reason, elementary school enrolments are the one area where demographics can predict the future with tremendous accuracy." (*David K. Foot in Boom Bust & Echo 2000*)
According to Statistics Canada's 1996 Census, about 7% of Alberta's population were between the ages of 0 and 4. This means that between 1997/1998 and 2000/2001, some 195,000 students could be expected to enter the school system, or on average about 48,750 each year. Based on Government of Alberta education statistics, the average enrolment in Alberta for Grade 1 for 1997/1998 to 1998/1999 was 44,450 students, implying that enrolment could be over 50,000 for each of the 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 school years.

## The Market For French Immersion

French immersion is a subset of the total market offering for those seeking an education. This is a critical point to keep in mind, because the potential customer for French immersion is first and foremost someone who is seeking a quality education for her or someone in her guardianship. A parent or guardian who makes a choice "not to use" the regular programs offered by the public school system program offerings does so because she perceives some positive differentiation, and an advantage to be gained through a French immersion program.

One of the first questions that must be asked therefore is: "What are the base educational requirements that must be exceeded in order to draw a potential customer during the recruitment phase?" One might ask: "What are the basic product attributes that must be present for any education offering; and how is immersion perceived to affect the value (or contribute to an added value) of that basic education offering?"

These questions which impact on both the recruitment and the retention strategies go to defining the market segment most likely to seek out or "buy into" the French immersion concept. With primary education, the decision- makers are extremely unlikely to be the consumer of the product. The "consumer" of the education product only affects the decision through the parent or guardian's perception of her needs and abilities. The greater influence on the decision will likely be found in the decision maker's background, including: the education decisions that were made for them and their perceptions about the value of those decisions (which includes and is affected by their experiences and the experiences of their peer group with French language instruction); their perceptions about the world around them and what skills are needed for "success" now and in the future; and their economic position and the impact of the education decision on their other lifestyle choices.
For some, child rearing will be viewed as an opportunity to "recreate" themselves. However, I suspect that the majority looks at child rearing with an optimistic view toward creating a "better" life and the greatest of possible opportunities for their children. Whatever the criterion the decision-maker uses to define ultimate success in child rearing, education must be looked upon as a key input in the production of a complete human being. The parent or guardian's definition of "complete" will initially determine the education supply alternatives they examine and the choices they make. The success of their choices will be continually measured against that definition, though the definition of "complete" may be altered to varying degrees by changing circumstances and perceptions over time.

### Factors Affecting the Education Decision

In January of 1999 the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages published a paper entitled "Motivations for School Choices by Eligible Parents Outside Quebec." The study was based on the opinions of 81 parents interviewed in four Canadian cities (*including Calgary*) through a total of eight facilitated group meetings. The study divided the factors motivating the education decision into six categories: Technical, Psychological, Demographic, Economic, Political and Cultural. While the study was aimed at parents who have the constitutional right to have their children educated in French (*under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*), the findings might be helpful in determining the motivations for the education decision generally, especially as it relates to language. Although the focus of this paper is on the decision as it relates to immersion in the public schools (*which do not involve Section 23 rights*), I have been able to draw some insights that may be helpful in developing marketing plans for immersion programs.

### Technical Factors

The study labelled all those factors that create the opportunity for choice in the education decision as "technical." An example of a technical factor would include the mere existence of an accessible alternate school program. The technical factors establish the size of the overall target market from which an individual school might hope to attract students. For example, each school will have a geographic region from within which the school is more or less accessible. Transportation related issues, such as busing, are technical factors, which in part, determine accessibility.

Just as with any other product or service, technical factors must be addressed before a school can be said to be making an education offering to market. A school must have a program of instruction that meets established standards and at least matches the quality of instruction available in other competing schools. Furthermore, it must provide a pleasant and safe learning environment, with extra-curricular activities comparable to those available in alternative learning institutions. Finally it must have physical access by the community or communities it wishes to serve.

One of the important issues that affect French immersion (*and all non- traditional school programs*) in the public school system is in the physical space made available for such programs. Rather than taking the most positive and productive approach of locating programs in the communities with the highest market demand or potential for success of such programs, school jurisdictions will purposely locate these programs in "empty" schools. These schools are often in the oldest buildings with high maintenance needs and the lowest levels of modernization. As a result these programs are likely disadvantaged from the start, facing much higher costs associated with meeting the basic technical factors.

### Psychological Factors

The psychological factors affecting the education choice are more intangible and more difficult to measure than are the technical factors. However, these factors are extremely important in positioning a language education offering. For example, the self-esteem of both guardian and student combined with their perceptions about the benefits associated with the acquisition of two languages (*and French in particular*) will have a critical impact on both the initial education decision, and on the potential for success within a language differentiated education system.

An immersion school program must make its offering conscious of the many psychological factors that might come into play, and intent on differentiating its product offering and positioning it within the psychological factors that will come into play for its target market. For example, the critical student mass required for the success of an immersion program located in a mainly unilingual English neighbourhood may be purposely suited to attract students whose parents speak no French at all, and will structure its marketing materials as to allay any fears that parents may have about sending their children through French Immersion. Another program, whose strategy involves attracting fewer students and providing more focussed instruction to improve the odds of academic success, may discourage enrolment of children who do not have at least one parent or guardian with a working knowledge of French. In either case, the strategic direction of the immersion program must be a conscious one, and the image to be achieved in the community in which the school operates must also be a conscious one.

### Demographic Factors

Demographic factors are going to have the greatest single impact on the education decision. Such demographic factors will include the level and form of the decision makers' education, the family's linguistic background, the age of the parents/guardians, and the family's geographic and economic stability.

The 1996 Statistics Canada Census suggests that just over 2% of Alberta's population consider themselves to be either French or bilingual in French and English. This figure in itself may have an effect on the psychological factors affecting the education choice. If guardians perceive Alberta as their "world," French might be viewed as unnecessary or unimportant. However, factors such as the family's geographic and linguistic history, education, and work experience may have a significant counter balancing impact on this perception.

As outlined earlier, age demographics will, of course, affect the number of school age children available within a particular region as well. Extrapolating from the average expected annual elementary school enrolment of more than 50,000, minimum new enrolments in Francophone programs alone over the next few years should average more than 1,000 students per year, assuming French and bilingual parents are predisposed to choosing French language education and assuming school age children are evenly distributed across the population. A particular school may choose to broaden its access to market by appealing to a wider demographic group, or pursue a strategy that narrows the demographic with a hope to create a higher quality product and/or secure a longer-term loyalty and market retention.

The fact that enrolment in French Immersion at the Grade 1 level has been in the range of 6% to 6.5% in recent years, suggests that immersion programs do have a wider appeal and a perceived value to families who do not view themselves as bilingual in French and English. In effect, the desire for bilingualism and the perceived value in multilingualism and multiculturalism makes French Immersion marketable to a broader demographic. However, the further removed are the factors of linguistic and family background, the more important other factors will become in the education decision. To put it another way, if families do not feel an intrinsic pressure to choose some form of "French" education, then the education decision will be based on factors other than language. Marketing efforts that put an emphasis on "French for the sake of French" will be less successful in attracting these families.

Other demographic factors that are likely to affect the education decision, especially with respect to the question of language, may include the educational background of the parents/guardians, the age of the decision- makers, and the gender of the main education decision-maker. The family's geographic stability may also be important in relation to the perceived ease of transference from one school program to another. In this regard, the issue of standards within different French Immersion programs may also be significant.

### Economic Factors

The perception of future economic return from the education decision is likely to be an important element for some parents or guardians. Much has been written and said about the importance of multilingualism in the developing global economy. To compete in world markets, Alberta companies will likely have to hire or train multilingual staff and consultants. Therefore, It seems likely that, all else being equal, businesses would be willing to pay some premium for multilingual workers. Certainly, current evidence suggests that bilingual Canadians earn about 3% more than their unilingual counterparts. However, little can be stated definitively in terms of future individual economic benefits and marketing material is best to deal with the subject through a more subtle value-added approach. In other words, one might assume that if the parent or guardian perceives that a student is better prepared for the world through multiple language education, then it stands to reason that such a student would

stand to be better rewarded, economically and otherwise. Marketing strategies that attempt to affect the perception of economic benefits will have to be balanced carefully with materials that are aimed at other psychological and political perceptions.

### Political Factors

Similar to Economic factors, political factors, as they are defined in the study, seem to be more factors of psychological perception than factors that can be defined and used from a marketing perspective. However, in Canada political factors also deserve some special mention since the temperature of the national unity debate will likely affect the decision making for some of those considering French immersion as an education option. For some decision makers political factors are rooted in demographic factors such as linguistic heritage or psychological factors concerning the perceived benefits to be gained through knowledge of French. Some others who perceive a value in any second language may be persuaded to choose or reject French on the weight of political factors.

One could argue that it is dangerous to pursue purely political factors when positioning an education offering, because any French immersion program requires long term customer loyalty to be effective, while purely political motivations are more akin to fads. There would almost certainly be considerable erosion of the student population if the expectations of the person making the politically motivated decision do not materialize. The continued motivation and sense of belonging on the part of the student may be one means of converting the political short sale into a long-term customer.

The politicization of the "French language issue" can also have a detrimental effect on demand for immersion schools. Some rational adults, who might otherwise perceive value in multilingualism, can be dissuaded by the heat of politically motivated arguments. This resistance, once begun, can be difficult to overcome. Some parents will go to considerable lengths and expense to have their language education objectives met without French immersion.

### Cultural Factors

While cultural factors may also be argued to be a subset of psychological and demographic factors, they are significant enough to the education decision to warrant specific consideration. The psychological elements of cultural factors go to the sense of belonging or need to belong to a distinctive cultural community, and the level of associated prestige with bilingualism. The demographic elements of cultural factors are to be found in the cultural and perhaps even linguistic heritage of the family and on their values concerning the linkage to their roots. (*Many individuals consider -themselves to be of French heritage, though they may not have rights under Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.*) The marketing strategy will have to be aware of the significance of these factors within the targeted market, with a conscious decision made with respect to the commitments made to address these values.

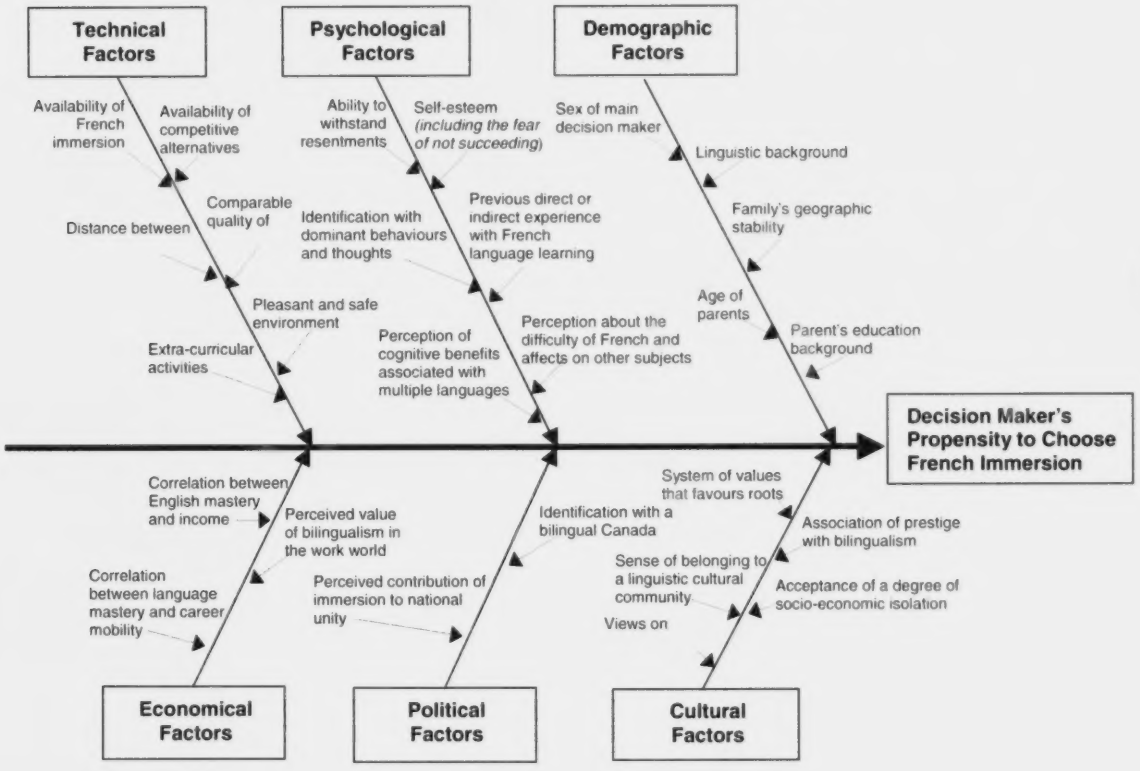
Canadian culture, more broadly, might be thought to raise questions about the value and effect of multiculturalism, as well as a more universal prestige in bilingualism or multilingualism. Views on these factors and on the future of "Canadian culture" will likely have a significant impact on education decision- makers, regardless of other roots. In fact, I

spoke with one family whose background was English and based in the Maritimes, but who had along family tradition of sending children through French immersion. This cultural heritage strongly valued multilingualism.

### The French Immersion Education Decision

The following diagram, adapted from one produced in the Federal Government of Canada study, suggests a model for viewing the education decision, as it will likely exist in the mind of the decision maker(s) .The strength of the various factors will likely vary from individual to individual, but a French immersion program must understand and be prepared to describe its offering with respect to each of these factors. Furthermore, since there is no direct financial consequence in choosing a French immersion program over a regular public school program, these factors establish the perceived value of an immersion offering.

**Factors Considered**
**When Parents Decide on a French Immersion Program**




### Recruitment Strategies

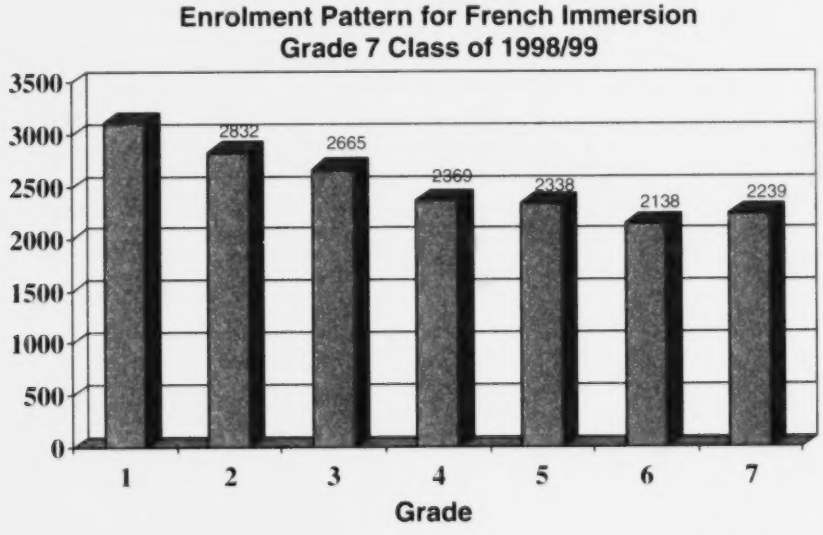
The question that must be raised from the recruitment perspective is: "What is a reasonable, achievable and sustainable market share for French immersion in Alberta?" Should schools be satisfied with the 6% to 7% achieved at the elementary level over the last decade, or is the success of the program important enough to warrant the additional marketing effort necessary to push enrolment up above 10%. Some might even suggest that a stretch target of 20% is both attainable and desirable. Assuming that between 40,000 to 50,000 students enter the

system each year for the next few years, reaching the 10% market share of new recruits means attracting 1,600 to 2,000 additional students. In other words, enrolment in French immersion would have to increase by 60% to 70%.

Since current levels have been achieved with (*as I understand*) virtually no marketing effort, it is reasonable to assume that recruitment can be significantly increased if the Alberta regions pursue combined and independent marketing efforts. Just as Universities recruit in high schools, French immersion programs should be bringing their messages to the parents of children in neighbourhood day-cares, local "swim and gyms", and other settings where parents of preschool children might meet. An aggressive marketing program might even reach parents or potential parents many years in advance (perhaps even at pre-natal or post-natal counselling) to ensure adequate planning.

### Retention versus Recruitment

The diagram below charts the enrolment pattern for the group of students that began with French immersion in Grade 1 in 1992/93, through to the class that completed Grade 6 in 1997/98, and was then augmented with new recruits for Grade 7 in 1998/99. The diagram suggests a loss of nearly 1,000 students, or 30% of the original enrolment by the completion of Grade 6.




The implications of this enrolment pattern cannot be overstated. For one of three students who start an immersion program, the program fails to deliver the expected results. Assuming that there is one child per family in each grade, by the end of Grade 6, there are 1,000 families with a negative experience in French immersion speaking with their friends and neighbors about what they've learned.

This "negative marketing" is increasing and will continue to increase the costs associated with recruiting each additional student. By negatively impacting the psychological factors that affect the main decision makers, through the past experiences of their peers, past program performance significantly impacts future recruitment efforts. Because there are limited entry points, immersion programs depend on the commitment of the families in order

to maintain class sizes through each year of the program. First and foremost, therefore, the programs must show commitment to the students and families that are recruited, and must be ready to deliver the product promised and implied.

Marketing cannot be accomplished independent of the product. To be effective, administrators and teachers will have to work together to deliver a product that consistently meets or exceeds the expectations and values of the families recruited. Without this recognition, market share is not sustainable and recruitment efforts will become increasingly more expensive.

## Conclusions

"Language education generally could be well positioned to take advantage of current perceptions regarding globalization and the implications that this has for education in Alberta. However, French immersion in Alberta appears to be failing a significant share of its existing market, while not capturing its appropriate share of enrolments each year. There appears to be a need for better customer communications and planning to ensure the success of the program in the future.

An effective plan for promoting a French immersion program will oblige school administrators to carefully consider each of the decision factors discussed in this paper. For example, the image of a French immersion program might be greatly enhanced if it were included in the plans for new school facilities in new or growing neighbourhoods. A proactive approach would be to lobby and work with local policy setters and even developers to ensure ease of access to immersion programs.

School districts might also consider working together, perhaps with support from companies with international operations, to affect the perceptions of potential customers through public forums and advertising. Individual schools should certainly consider the post secondary model of recruitment, accessing and informing the decision makers prior to the decision being made. For elementary schools, this means actively seeking out and communicating with parents or guardians of preschool children. For late immersion programs it means communicating with elementary school students and their parents or guardians.

Some commitment to marketing and to better meeting expectations will be required at each level (*school, region, and province*) to ensure a higher and more sustainable market share for French immersion. Each school and region should set specific market goals and take the necessary planning and implementation steps to ensure these goals are achieved. The future fate of language education in Alberta will depend on the actions taken now.

BACKGROUNDER

# Program Promotion: Generating Interest and Involvement

Two jurisdictions (one urban/one rurban) were rewarded with significant growth in French immersion enrolment (up to 30%) after implementing a marketing plan. Using the attached planning matrix, each jurisdiction developed a plan to meet its unique needs. In this hands-on workshop, participants will learn about this planning model and apply it to a mock scenario to develop a marketing plan for a jurisdiction with lagging immersion enrolment.

## An Example Of How It Works

### *Situation*

Enrolment in the district's French immersion kindergarten program had dropped significantly. As kindergarten was the prime entry point for the district's French immersion program, a drop in enrolment was not a good portent for the health of the overall program.

### *Response*

Concerned with the downward trend, the jurisdiction's French immersion coordinator—Pierrette Messier-Peet approached the communications coordinator Suzanne Lundrigan with the problem. The two worked with an already established French immersion steering committee, which included parents, teachers and administrators, to develop a plan aimed at increasing the registration in French immersion. With a broad spectrum of stakeholders represented on the committee, it served as a focus group for identifying target audiences; developing messages for those audiences and developing strategies to deliver those messages.

### *Outcomes*

The committee developed a schedule of activities that ran throughout the year. Enrolment increased by approximately thirty per cent. Morale improved.

## The Keys To Success

### *Research*

At the outset, the committee devoted time to conducting a thorough and honest self-appraisal of the challenges that it faced. This examination of conscience helped the committee identify the two key strengths it would promote as well as the two key weaknesses it would

focus on improving. The committee did not spread itself too thin. This informal environmental scan guided decisions about where to focus resources.

*Clearly articulated goal*

The committee agreed to a clearly articulated achievable goal—something we could measure. Again the committee made sure not to bite off more than it could chew. We wanted to taste success; not feel that we'd fallen short of our goal.

*A planned systematic approach*

The team carefully planned every initiative and knew well ahead of time what piece of the puzzle should fall into place when; who would take care of getting it done and how we would evaluate our efforts. The publicity campaign crescendoed in the weeks before registration. Note: a lot of less glitzy hard work was done well in advance—booking an expert in French immersion learning for a parent evening; opening the classrooms so parents could have their child have a kindergarten experience, etc. Thanks to careful planning, promotional tools like brochures and posters were ready well ahead of time.

Recognizing that parents needed time to interact with teachers to feel comfortable about enrolling their children in the program, limited advertising dollars were focused on promoting opportunities for face to face communication, such as the test drive French immersion opportunity and the parent information evening.

*Involvement of all involved early on*

Teachers, parents and administrators became committed to turning the downward enrolment trend around because they recognized the deleterious effect it would have on the program, their jobs and the children's education. As a result the work was shared across the committee instead of being left to one or two individuals—this built a broad base of support for the initiative and meant the same messages were being delivered consistently.

*Internal people understood and accepted the role they had to play*

In fact, addressing the internal issues first was a key to the success of this initiative. When we moved to work with the public audience, everybody was well prepared and able to play their part.

*A commitment to evaluation*

Each activity was measured for its impact. How many people came to the parent information evening? How many tear-off information slips were removed from the posters? And of course, the ultimate evaluation—the number of students that registered in kindergarten.

Suzanne Lundrigan, Manager, Communication Services, Alberta School Boards Association, Edmonton
Pierrette Messier-Peet, Teacher, École Notre-Dame, Edmonton
Carmen Mykula, Second Language Facilitator, Parkland School Division, Stony Plain

**Goal**
**Definition:** No more than 30 words; Realistic, Measurable; Simple language
**Example:** Enrollment in our district will increase by 5 per cent.

| OBJECTIVES | AUDIENCE | MESSAGE | STRATEGIES | RESPONSIBLE | TIMELINES | BUDGET | EVALUATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| By the end of June, our parents will be aware of our jurisdiction's successes and prepared to serve as active advocates for our program. | Parents with children in the system at key transition points:<br><br>Kindergarten<br><br>Grade 7<br><br>Grade 10 | "Our district offers students academic success." | 1. Develop list of parent advocates who could serve as references to new parents. Share stories of academic success with these parents. List them as references for the system. | Suzanne | Before the end of June | Time | How many calls did our advocates receive? Did they feel prepared? Feedback from new parents. Did "sales" occur as a result of this contact? |
| | | | 2. Each school will have at least two academic success stories in the local media. | School representative | Before the end of June | Time | Is each school featured twice? Are the stories about academic success? |
| **DEFINITIONS** | | | | | | | |
| These are the milestones we have to hit to achieve our goal.<br><br>**Criteria:**<br>No more than four<br>Set deadline<br>Measurable<br>Specific | This is whom we have to reach to achieve our objectives.<br><br>**Criteria:**<br>Choose audiences you can impact<br>Be specific<br>Define your audience thoroughly:<br>- Size<br>- Background<br>- Attitude<br>- Influence<br>- Accessibility | This is what these audiences have to hear to act in the way we wish.<br><br>**Criteria:**<br>Keep them simple<br>Motivational | How do we get this message to this audience?<br><br>**Criteria:**<br>Consider the audience<br>Consider the content<br>Capitalize on existing opportunities<br>Explore all your options:<br>- Face to face<br>- Promotions<br>- Publicity<br>- Advertising | Who will take the lead?<br><br>**Criteria:**<br>Share the duties | When will strategies, tools are put into place. Track progress.<br><br>**Criteria:**<br>Be specific<br>Be realistic | Money and people | How will we know that our efforts have succeeded?<br><br>**Criteria:**<br>Be specific<br>Quantitative<br>Qualitative<br>Measure objective/strategy |

SESSION NOTES

# Program Promotion: Generating Interest and Involvement

**Suzanne Lundrigan, Pierrette Messier Peet and Carmen Mykula**

The following summary was prepared from notes taken during the session by a volunteer recorder, and from any other written records of the session as may have been kept on flip charts or work sheets. The summary was reviewed by the session presenters and printed with their agreement.

## Communications Planning

St. Albert Protestant Separate School District saw a 38% increase in Kindergarten enrolment after the first year of the implementation of a communications plan. In Parkland County, Kindegarten and Grade 1 enrolments increased.

In order for a communications plan to work:

- listen to what your communities are saying
- ask tough questions
- be open to what you might hear
- realize communication is not a one time thing
- realize it is not a one person job
- start from a listening position
- involve representatives from across the whole system: administrators, parents, teachers, etc.

To gather information on communities contact Statistics Canada and Databook

Conduct a SWOT Analysis: identify *S*trengths, *W*eaknesses, *O*pportunities, *T*hreats

Identify audiences

Establish messages: simple, motivational, unique to audience.

Select tools: open houses, thank you notes, radio shows, etc. Do not use just written tools for reaching audiences.

Ask what success would look like when the objective is reached—how can it be quantified, qualified?

[Delegates were then presented with the following scenario from which to work in building a communications plan.]

Welcome to "C'est Beau School District". This will be your reality for this afternoon's workshop.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

- District serves 8000 students in mid-size city (50,000) and surrounding rural communities.
- Japanese-owned pulp and paper mill employs 65 per cent of people in city. Recent expansion - booming economy.
- Military base re-opened last year.
- Served by daily newspaper/three rural papers/two radio stations.
- Prosperous farmers surround the city.

## THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

- French Immersion offered for 14 years.
- Dual-track program -- offered in schools in the city. Bussing not an issue. Community school is equidistant to the F I programs.
- Two graduating classes so far (75 per cent of graduates attend university)
- Two FI graduates received 1998 U of A gold medals for top marks in Pharmacy and Arts
- Kindergarten enrolment dropping steadily over last five years --down two to three students each year. (16 students this year)
- Kindergarten/lower elementary teachers enjoy the smaller classes and question merit of publicizing too much. (18 to 21 students this year. Elementary teachers skip French Immersion meetings.
- Overall program maintains low profile -- There was only one article in the paper last year -- and that was about a drop in achievement test results.

  In fact this was the first time in five years the marks had been that low. Typically F I students scored well above provincial average, but no one had shared that information with the reporter.
- That one article has been damaging. People still calling district office asking why kids were doing so bad in French Immersion.
- Elementary program housed in district's newest school (dual-track program). Students have access to all the best technology.

## PARENTS

- Very supportive and vocal. Committed to seeing their children bilingual
- Since the newspaper article about the marks wondering about University achievement - especially in Sciences.

## TEACHERS

- Most teachers with the district for more than 10 years
- 65 per cent enrolled in Masters programs
- Very supportive of creating extracurricular French experiences for students:
  - Grade 6 students go to Falher
  - Grade 9 to Quebec
  - Grade 12 to France

## DISTRICT CONTEXT

- Dollars are getting tighter Principals from other schools grumbling about small class sizes at French Immersion -- calling for grades to be mixed.

- English classrooms are jampacked as a result of recent influx of military families to the new base -- many from Quebec -- parents tend to place children in English program -- fear students won't learn English.

**SCHOOL BOARD**

- Previous board had been strong supporters.

- October 1998 elections brought three new faces to the five-member board table including one board member who had campaigned on having the district offer a Japanese program. She pointed out influx of 300 Japanese families (new mill employees)

- Board wants status report on French Immersion program by December 12.

**THE SUPERINTENDENT**

- Generally supportive of FI program. Authorized $5000 in advertising expenditures for last summer's Kindergarten campaign. Didn't work.

- Superintendent has allocated $10,000 for campaign this year but has indicated the board wanted a full accounting of what would be done with the funds -- and that there had better be results or else.

## SWOT Analysis

*Strengths in regards to scenario*

- no competition
- growing community
- newest/modern school
- busing not a problem
- teachers supportive of creating extra curricular activities
- supportive parents
- $10,000 for campaign
- teachers upgrading
- good academic results (75% going to university)
- program established
- stable staff
- supportive superintendent
- small class sizes (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)
- dual track (seen by some as a strength, by others as a weakness because of use of English)
- 65% of teachers enrolled in Masters program
- new board, 3 new out of 5 members (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)

*Weaknesses*

- bad publicity, one bad article
- low profile with the press
- internal sabotage, teachers not attending meetings
- low enrolment
- principals complain of budgetary cuts
- split classes, not seen as positive
- dual track (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)
- small classes (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)
- Kindergarten enrolment low
- 65% of teachers in Masters program costly
- marks down in achievement tests
- military moving in
- new board, 3 new out of 5 members (seen by some as a strength and by others as a weakness)

*Opportunities*

- more native Francophones with military
- number of media opportunities
- status report to Board—there is interest in knowing what's going on
- supportive, vocal, strong parents
- $1000 from Board for a campaign
- booming economy
- successful grads
- small classes (can be negative also)
- high enrolment in English classes
- influx of Japanese families

*Threats*

- board wants status report by December 12
- one board member who wants immersion Japanese program
- 3 new board members (could go either way)
- dollars are getting tighter
- competition: small French immersion classes vs large English classes
- increasing need for English-as-a-second-language

This whole process deals a lot with perceptions

*Four objectives were chosen (prioritized) from SWOT analysis by presenter:*

1. Elementary teachers will understand the necessity of promoting the immersion program
   Audiences: teachers, principals
2. Japanese parents will be aware of French immersion program
   Audience: Japanese parents
   Key influence people/advocates (convince one, he then goes out to promote program):
   the employer or recruiter of Japanese parents
   real estate agents/welcome wagon
3. New military parents will be aware of French immersion program
   Audiences: communications officer
   military
   real estate agents
   CPF
   military parent on committee
   mothers (they usually make schooling decisions)
   day cares
4. Current parents will not be prepared to advocate on behalf of the program
   Audiences : positively committed parents, experienced parents

[Delegates then broke into groups to work on each objective. The following tables are samples of what delegates came up with.]

| OBJECTIVE | AUDIENCE | MESSAGE | STRATEGIES | RESPONSIBLE | TIMELINES | BUDGET | EVALUATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary teachers will understand the necessity of prompting the immersion program | | Promotion of the French immersion program benefits you (the teacher) | -meet with staff leaders<br>-do enrolment projections<br>-meet with the whole staff to share the facts or the problem of low enrolment<br>-use professional development day to meet<br>-involve staff in generating strategies for dealing with decline in enrolment and/or promotion ideas<br>-have teachers develop individual team action plans | | Nov. 30 professional development day | $0 | -10% increase in number of staff showing up for future FI meetings<br>-pre/post attitudinal survey of staff<br>-teachers more positive about program around school |
| (A second group discussed the same objective) | Teachers Principals | Teachers are important to success; success won t happen by itself | -staff meetings<br>-professional development days<br>-one on ones<br>-listen to them, get ideas<br>-celebrate successes | Administration and informal leaders in the school | -monthly<br>-one on ones to get ideas<br>-professional developm t days<br>-ongoing | $0, maybe some for professional development days | -more enrichment<br>-teachers meetings<br>-second one on one<br>-lower attrition from Grade 1 |

| OBJECTIVE | AUDIENCE | MESSAGE | STRATEGIES | RESPONSIBLE | TIMELINES | BUDGET | EVALUATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Japanese parents will be aware of French immersion program | a. Japanese parents<br>b. Employer/ recruiter<br>c. Key influence | Student benefits of French immersion: high academic achievement, globally competitive, equal opportunities, challenging program.<br><br>We will learn about the Japanese and they will learn about Canada through learning English and French | -web sites<br>-face to face with CEO<br>-using committed parents<br>-multicultural night<br>-brochure | -Superintendent with CEO<br>-Parents to do multicultural night | -Web site before arrival of Japanese<br>-upon arrival and according to needs | $1000.00 for brochures<br>$2000.00 for welcoming | -enrol 20% of eligible students<br>-positive feedback from company and CEO<br>-Japanese families are involved |

| OBJECTIVE | AUDIENCE | MESSAGE | STRATEGIES | RESPONSIBLE | TIMELINES | BUDGET | EVALUATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current parents will be prepared to advocate an behalf of the program. | -positive parents<br>-key influence parents<br>-CPF | -you are very important and very capable<br>-promoting French immersion benefits the entire school community<br>-the advantages of the French immersion program | -newsletter<br>-school council meetings<br>-invite the group to the school<br>-media article featuring the group of parents<br>-flyer/brochure<br>-open house where this parent group is present as a resource | -parents council every second issue<br>-CPF<br>-principal to put on agenda<br>-parents, teachers, principal/<br>-administration/ teachers<br>-parents/school staff<br>-school | -every second issue<br>-2 x per year<br>-spring<br>-late fall<br>-February<br>-spring | $0<br>$0<br>$20-50<br>$0<br>$2,000<br>$0 | -did we meet the deadlines?<br>-did we do this 2 x per year?<br>-qualitative<br>-upon registration: ask parents where they heard about program: newsletter, newspaper, flyer, etc.<br>-guest book, questionnaire |

## Further comments by delegates

"Communications marketing should have happened 5 years or 10 years ago."

"Something has to be done in my district. We are not going to wait for the district. Our own school will do something. Facilitation resources will help."

"How cheap it is. It takes a lot of manpower and commitment, but not a lot of money."

"There used to be a government department that offered support for how to run a board meeting, how to facilitate, etc. We need a skilled facilitator to show us how."

"There should be specialized sessions at the ATA on this."

"Target the new teachers so that they have long-term good attitudes toward French immersion and lessen internal sabotage."

## *Effective communications isn't:*

- A cover-up
- A panacea
- Just publicity
- A one-time event
- A one-person job

## *Establish goal*

- No more than 30 words
- Clear simple language
- Realistic/achievable
- Measurable

## *Effective communications is:*

- Planned
- Systematic
- Two-way
- Ongoing
- Consistent

## *First steps*

- **Analysis**
  - Why were numbers dropping?
  - What was happening around us: (Local/ Provincial/National)
- **Research**
  - Statistics Canada
  - Databook
  - Economic development officers
  - Chambers of Commerce

## *Houston.....we have a problem*

- Set up a committee
- School administrators
- Teachers
- Parents ***
- Central office staff

"If people are your customers you would do well to know what they want and what they think. Then, if you want to prosper, you'll give it to them."

## *SWOT analysis*

- Strengths
- Weaknesses = Internal

- Opportunities
- Threats = External

## *Identify audiences*

- Influence
- Size
- Attitude
- Background
- Accessibility

## *Set objectives*

- Objectives have to be specific
- Objectives have to be measurable
- Set 4 objectives at the most
- Set a deadline

## *Establish messages*

- Messages must be simple.
- Messages must be motivational.
- Messages will be unique to each audience.

## *Identify audiences*

- Target your audiences: be specific.

- Choose audiences you can impact.
  (Grandparents impact enrolment decisions.
  Wealthy community = Snowbirds
  = How accessible in February?)

## *Choose strategies*

- Advertising
- Publicity
- Face to face

## *Choose strategies*

- What tool do we use to communicate this message to each audience?
  - Consider the audience
  - Consider the content
  - Remember existing tools
  - Explore all your options

## *Timelines and Budget*

- Specify when each piece is to be complete
- Allocate your available dollars

## *Strategies*

- Look beyond paper:
  - Face to face (ideal/expensive/time consuming)
  - Publicity (message out for free/loss of control)
  - Advertising (costs money/control message)

## *Evaluation*

- Be specific
- Quantitative
- Qualitative
- Measure against objective
- Measure against the strategy

## *Who's responsible*

- Build in systematic buy-in
- Share the load

"I sure wish I'd done a better job of communicating with GM people…there we were charging up the hill right on schedule, and I looked behind me and saw that many people were still at the bottom…"

[redacted]
CEO General Motors

# Appendix G

- Demers, Daniel. **"A Changing Perspective: Meeting the Needs of All Students."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.* Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
  Reprinted with permission.

- Mykula, Carmen, Anne Shillington, and Angèle Aubin. **"Learning Assistance Within French Immersion: The Experience of Two Districts."** *French Immersion in Alberta: Building the Future: Leading the Way 2000—Conference Report.*
  Canmore, May 1–2, 2000. Edmonton: Building the Future Conference Committee, 2000.
  Reprinted with permission.

- Alberta Learning. ***Modèle d'intervention progressive conçue pour offrir des services éducatifs particuliers aux élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux.***
  Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2000.

# A Changing Perspective
# Meeting the Needs of All Students

**Daniel Demers**
**Principal, Glenayre School, Coquitlam SD, British Columbia**

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

Good morning. My philosophy is very simple: no one in the world can do anything by themselves when it comes to dealing with children. Everything we do is collaboration, whether we do it directly or through non-human resources, we cannot just sit down by ourselves and look at the needs of students individually. It is not because we aren't intelligent or because we don't have knowledge, it is just that every child we deal with is different from another. Applying a formula across the board to any of our special needs students is just impossible. They are as different from each other as the non-disabled or the non-special needs students are.

The four questions I will address in this session are:

- Learning disabilities or learning difficulties: the theoretical differences?
- Do we modify the mandated curriculum or accommodate a classroom arrangement to help the child achieve the mandate?
- Who does it and how do we do it?
- Is this possible in French immersion or do we transfer the child?

I want to start with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Each of us has one of those. Our zone of proximal development is the one in which we welcome information, process it and deal with it. But Vygotsky also says we have two other zones, one in which that kind of information is no longer triggering any kind of excitement or stimulus, and the other is which we are just frustrated. We try to teach and learn in the zone of proximal development. In a situation like this session or at the university or reading a book, the material to be learned will hit us in the zone where we are bored stiff, or in just the right spot where we are receptive, or it will be so frustrating that we cannot make the leap from where we are to where the material wants us to be.

In a teaching situation, we are dealing with groups, various individuals with various zones of proximal development. We have to be able to impart information, either adult to adult, or adult or child, or system to child by giving them the information that will hit that zone of proximal development. Whatever is said will hit some people right on target, will bore some and will frustrate those who are missing the links to make the leap to understanding.

Imagine having to provide programming for these three "classrooms" (please see Exhibit 1). All these people were, at one time or another, in a position of formal schooling. They have all accomplished a great deal within our society, and some will be remembered eternally. Yet all of them bring many different stresses in a classroom situation. They also bring different kinds of stress to their parents, who have to deal with them. I am the parent of two children with individual needs, one is gifted with LD, a motor skills problem, and one has a

THINK OF A CLASSROOM OR A SCHOOL WITH THE FOLLOWING LEARNERS:

**MOZART EINSTEIN GALILEO LEONARDO DA VINCI JULES VERNE**
**ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON THOMAS EDISON**
**RODIN THOMAS THOREAU LOUIS PASTEUR BEETHOVEN RODIN**

HOW ABOUT A CLASSROOM INCLUDING:

**GEORGE BERNARD SHAW DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER DAVID H. MURDOCK**
**F. SCOTT FITZGERALD GEORGE C. SCOTT THE WRIGHT BROTHERS**
**AGATHA CHRISTIE GEN. GEORGE PATTON JOHN F. KENNEDY**

IMAGINE DRAFTING AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR:

**CHER HENRY WINKLER STEPHEN HAWKINGS WHOOPI GOLDBERG**
**PETE ROSE SYLVESTER STALLONE "MAGIC" JOHNSON CARL LEWIS**
**SUZANNE SUMERS ROBIN WILLIAMS JOHN LENNON**

Exhibit 1 Classrooms with Famous People

dyslexic type of learning disability. Learning disabilities don't just come on at 9am and finish at 3 or 3:30. They stay right through the day. They don't end on June 25th either; they continue throughout the summer months. Those of you who deal with students with special needs, or have children with special needs, or yourselves are adults with special needs know that there is no on and off switch.

How do we look at the needs of all these people? We look at it by understanding where they come from.

Very rarely are we a pure anything. Often we are affected by the learning situation: the environment we are in, our mood, the day of the week, etc. We usually have two people dealing in an interaction. How do we accommodate for the two different learning styles? Both the teacher and the learner has a learning style. The teacher's usually translates into a teaching style. How do we make sure that marriage results in some kind of learning between the two people?

The question for us to ask is: what am I doing in the teaching or learning environments to provide for all the modalities when I am teaching? Being the touchy-feely kind of teacher when you are not that kind of person is really awkward. Being the dry lecturer—referring to theory, quoting research, giving names and dates, or even knowing the gender of the writers—if you are not so inclined is also hard. Being all things is impossible, but if you are flexible, then at one point or another during the learning situation you will reach students when it is a good time for them to learn.

I believe that, by nature, we continually try to acquire more information. If we have systems in place that will let us be the type of learner we are, we will stand a better chance of succeeding. Some people, however, are thrown out of learning situations simply because of their learning styles. For example, I am a doodler. If any of my professors had seen my

notebooks, I would have most likely been in big trouble, because I have drawings—hundreds and hundreds of drawings—where my notes should be. I successfully completed my courses, even completed a Masters degree, etc. Still, if you see that Annie is organized and has bullets and sub-groups, etc. and then you look at Daniel's doodles, you may make a judgement—depending on who you are as a teacher or professor—that is not accurate. Sometimes the way notes are taken is not a representation of what is actually going on for the learner.

Motivation always helps too. You all paid to come here, so you are motivated to learn at least one or two things before you go back. Some people came from very far just to get a feel for what is going on elsewhere. That is a key. The home environment is important here, too. Children don't live at school; they are in a triangulation between home, school and teachers. Think of what some children's home situation might be like. For some children, school is the only organized part of their life. When they go home, it is to chaos, or emotional problems, family problems. Even good families have problems. It is part of life. We can't, as teachers, just have these kids come in as names in our classrooms. They have way more to handle that just what goes on in the classroom. They can come into the class with no breakfast and fresh from a fight, or they can come in dealing with the fact that their dog died. We constantly have to think of our learners as more than just students in chairs. It is an invisible part of the formula, but we have to think about that. Each of you is now either disposed or indisposed to learning, based on what you brought in here today. In dealing with learning difficulties we have to remember that teachers, parents and students are all part of the formula.

What about learning disabilities versus learning problems? The differences are cloudy, and in most writings, not even addressed. The three principles of learning described by the BC ministry of education as a basic mission statement encapsulate, for me, what learning is all about:

- Learning requires the active participation of the student
- People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates
- Learning is both an individual and a group process

To describe the differences between potential and performance, understanding how school systems quantify the gap is important. An average IQ is commonly accepted as being between 90 and 110. However, a single IQ figure is not enough to quantify a gap, so psychometric tests, such as the WISC III or the Stanford Binet, provide a profile for each subject being tested. The profile usually provides subtest scores that can help the school-based team in understanding the candidate's relative strengths or problematic areas. These are not academic tests like B-level tests. These tests deal with subjective information and require the expertise of licenced psychometricians who have been trained to administer and provide an interpretation of the subjective data.

The sub-tests are divided into verbal tests and performance tests. This provides a clearer picture of all sort of things. Students who are above average or below average end up with fairly similar profiles, although obviously individually specific profiles. Then, depending on the province's specific guidelines, your numeric scores give you the label average, mildly intellectually deficient or severely intellectually deficient. It depends on how the numbers are defined in your province.

The typical profiles for a child with a learning disability are more erratic. They often have profiles with high highs and low lows, whereas above average, below average or average profiles usually have fairly even scores and profile graphics. This fits with the theoretical description of what we know about a learning disabled students—an average intellectual person with very low scores in certain areas and very high scores in others. We see it so vividly in our classrooms: the difference between what they can do and what they can produce, the difference between doing a cognitive task and doing two cognitive tasks.

Richard Lavoie, producer of a video series called "Fat City Workshop" illustrates the difference between cognitive and non-cognitive: Imagine that you are driving a car with a standard transmission on the highway. You are driving it so automatically that you shift without thinking though the music is loud and kids are playing and singing in the back seat. A snow storm begins. Suddenly you are no longer on automatic. You have to turn down the music, quieten the kids and drive very carefully and concentrate on the clutch and on your speed.

So you can have an activity that is associative, such as driving a car in normal circumstances. But you also have cognitive tasks, where you really have to concentrate and you can only do one cognitive task at a time. For some students, listening and writing notes is two cognitive tasks. They can't do both. For some kids, coming up with ideas and writing them down is two cognitive tasks, not an associative task. Many of those children, when you ask them about their weekend, will just begin a long rambling story that goes from one thing to the next and you are dizzy by the time they finish their story. For these children, word retrieval is so cognitive that they can't free themselves from it enough to turn it into an associative task.

One student, Robbie, had a graphic profile like a roller coaster ride: very high peaks and low valleys. We were clearly dealing with a very superior learner, somebody with potential, according to the numbers on his profile (IQ 136, 21/32 verbal score/performance score, 99 percentile/92 percentile and 98 percentile overall scores.) Robbie was someone we would expect to accomplish a great deal, because he had only two scores below the 100 and they are in the 80s. To quantify learners like Robbie better, though, we do a "potential" and a "performance" analysis, so we can get a picture of where they should be and where they actually are. We do this with the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement. From his K-TEA scores, clearly Robbie's academic performance was well below his potential. That translates to frustration. It is typical of what children with learning disabilities have to deal with daily. It is like the frustrated artist who has a great idea in his head, but can't put it on paper.

We are dealing with the difference between what these students can do in their heads and what they can produce. We must make sure we have a way to accommodate these learners and help them produce something closer to their potential. What we have to understand, though, is that there is usually not just one learning problem. This child, any child, is a complex learner with a huge repertoire of strategies and problems. Each situation in the classroom, each moment, requires a different grouping of abilities, problems, and environments. When we test children like this in Grade 2 or 3, we must remember that they have had three or four years of schooling to create their current level of frustration. Many students with learning disabilities have a great gift of being able to compensate for many of their learning problems. They are wise enough and smart enough to figure out how to do something to get the most success. They have already started their own interventions and their own re-education by the time they are in Kindergarten. How do we pick a particular starting point? I can't tell you in advance, but by

understanding him and his learning style I can hope to find someone on the teaching team, who can deal with or recommend interventions in each area.

Testing can help to identify a child who has learning disabilities and the child dealing with a learning problem. A learning problem usually creates a gap in learning of one to three years, depending on the problem. A typical child with a learning disability in an elementary school is delayed by two years. The longer we wait to intervene, the more complex the issue becomes. Behavioural changes make it harder to identify the original problem. The child may have given up, shut down, or turned into the class clown.

There are differences between students who have learning disabilities and learning problems or delays in their school work. A learning problem is much more an issue of range than is a learning disability. There are children who perform to expectations but who have surgery in February and miss two weeks of school. Suddenly they are behind in their math because they missed two math concepts. It is a linear time thing rather than a quantitative, processing issue. For these kids it is just a matter of catching up.

When should children be pulled out of the classroom for assistance and when should they be dealt with in the classroom? This is where your school-based team is important in addressing the needs of students so that they don't fall through the cracks and in determining how a particular student can be best helped. But how can we use the psychologist's reports or the psychologists, psychometricians, and other specialists as good resource people on our teams? (The specialists who are the most underused, particularly with children in immersion, are speech and language pathologists. They are key personnel in school-based-team intervention because of their abilities not only to evaluate articulation and physiological aspects of speech but also to work on language development—grammar, literacy, knowledge of vocabulary, etc.)

There is help out there. If you are unable to get a psychometrician to help you interpret the psychometric tests, there is a little cheat-sheet that could help school-based teams identify strengths or areas of concern for a child by looking at their sub-test scores (please see Exhibit 2). The top row shows the sub-tests. If the child has strengths—and we should remember always to look for strengths and not just weaknesses—often they can be used to overcome the weaknesses. I have used severely learning disabled kids as tutors in math because that was their strength. This increases their self-confidence and sense of success. Take the first four: Information, Similarities, Arithmetic, Vocabulary. If you have that as an area of weakness, it identifies long-term memory difficulty or verbal comprehension. It will affect these components of learning. The best thing to do is ask your psychometrician to help you understand what these things mean for the child in the classroom. Where will he be having problems and successes based on this profile?

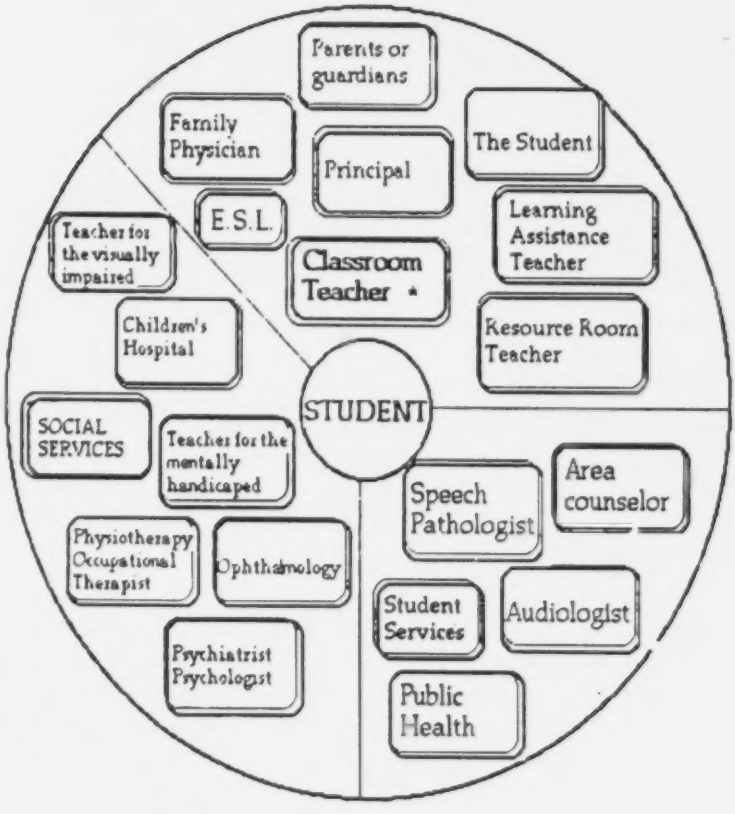
A good school-based team must be systematic and consistent. There must be rules understood by the entire school population—not only by the teachers, but by the whole support team at the school, district and community levels. It should also minimize the bureaucracy. This is where the role of the administrator is crucial. Looking at the School-Based Team Tracking Sheet (please see Exhibit 3), your team could look like this. It depends on whether you are in a large city or smaller district, where your support comes from. Some services have to be obtained from the nearest children's hospital.

| Information | Similarities | Arithmetic | Vocabulary | Comprehension | Digit Span | Pic. Completion | Pic. Arrangement | Block Design | Object Assembly | Coding | Mazes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Long Term Memory | Long Term Memory | Long Term Memory | Long Term Memory | | | Long Term Memory | | | | | |
| | | Short term Memory | | | Short term Memory | | | | | Short term Memory | |
| | | | | | | Non-Verbal Reasoning | Non-Verbal Reasoning | Non-Verbal Reasoning | Non-Verbal Reasoning | | Non-Verbal Reasoning |
| Verbal Comp. | Verbal Comp. | | Verbal Comp. | Verbal Comp. | | | | | | | |
| | | Working time/press | | | | Working time/press | Working time/press | Working time/press | Working time/press | Working time/press | Working time/press |
| | Verbal Reasoning | Verbal Reasoning | | Verbal Reasoning | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | Visual Memory | | | | Visual Memory | |
| Verbal Comp. | Verbal Comp. | | Verbal Comp. | Verbal Comp. | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Sequencing | | Sequencing | | | Sequencing | |
| | | | | | | Perception Meaningful Stimuli | Perception Meaningful Stimuli | | Perception Meaningful Stimuli | | |
| | | | | | | | | Perception Abstract Stimuli | | Perception Abstract Stimuli | Perception Abstract Stimuli |
| | | Freedom From Distractibility | | | Freedom From Distractibility | | | | | Freedom From Distractibility | |
| | | Concentration | | | Concentration | Concentration | | | | | Concentration |
| | | | | | | | | Perceptual Reproduction | | Perceptual Reproduction | |
| | | | | | | | | Visual Motor | Visual Motor | Visual Motor | Visual Motor |
| **Information** | **Similarities** | **Arithmetic** | **Vocabulary** | **Comprehension** | **Digit Span** | **Pic. Completion** | **Pic. Arrangment** | **Block Design** | **Object Assembly** | **Coding** | **Mazes** |

Exhibit 2 WISC-R Subtests to guide interpretation and design interventions
Adapted from Grossman, 1995.

## School-Based Team Tracking Sheet

STUDENT: _____ DIV.: _____
DATE: _____ DOB: _____
TEACHER: _____




From: THIS KID IS BROKEN; FIX-IT ! How to change that approach. Daniel Demers District 43 B.C.

Exhibit 3 School-based Team Tracking Sheet

## BE SYSTEMATIC AND CONSISTENT

A good way to avoid students falling between the proverbial "cracks" is to establish a simple and systematic school-based team process. Decisions should be taken following a collaborative process involving all stakeholders, especially the learner.

### STEP ONE

- Teachers', School's, Parents' or Student's observations of marked delays, "gap" between perceived potential and performance, certain level of frustration, changes/trauma, or inappropriate behaviors.

This step leads to: *1) initial conversations with the child and his or her family; 2) classroom Interventions and support using some accommodations & more systematic data collection; 3) informal discussions with the previous year's teacher(s) and a visit to the student's file is professional and will save time*. If problems persist, a formal request is made by the classroom teacher for a school-based team collaboration.

### STEP TWO

- School-based team collaboration.
- Sharing of information and data collected as well as the results of initial interventions.
- Identify strengths and remember them when designing interventions.
- Make responsible assessment and evaluation decisions to quantify and qualify delays in order to begin interventions a.s.a.p.
- Decide if modifications or adaptations of learning outcomes from the curriculum are necessary.
- Set short timelines and always follow up.

This step usually provides short term interventions/support for the student, the teacher and the parents. It should involve all stake holders and provide realistic timelines to review and assess interventions. It usually qualifies and somewhat quantifies the "gap". Most importantly, it will provide guidance for the individualized interventions and support necessary for the student, teacher and parent team. Involve the student as much as possible and always inform the parents.

### STEP THREE

- Assessment of the results of the interventions and accommodations put in place in Step Two with the school-based team.
- Identify any need for further modifications or adaptations to curriculum learning outcomes or program.
- Identify need for further assessment including full psychometric evaluation.
- Repeat steps One and Two with systematic support, review and evaluate.

1) Avoid trying to "fix" everything at once; 2) set small goals and review often; 3) always try to answer the question: *What should the child, teacher or parents do starting now?* 4) make assessment decision to assist the design of interventions rather than to label the learner; 5) involve the child as often as possible; remember to celebrate successes and to use strengths whenever possible to remediate content gaps.

Exhibit 4 Be Systematic and Consistent

I have divided the team into (starting at the top of the pie) school-based team members, then (moving clockwise) district-based team members and then community-based services. You will have more or fewer team members depending upon the child. Again, I go back to the beginning to remind you that there is no magic formula and each child needs to be dealt with differently. You cannot apply the same principle to each child and you cannot have the same team members for each child. That is not how the collaboration works. Success works by beginning with the school-based team—school counsellor, resource room teachers, classroom teachers and the learning assistance teacher. This team identifies the kind of learner they are dealing with and then brings in others.

I have included our school's team forms in your handouts. (Please see Attachment 1 at the end of this session.) Please feel free to use these in your schools and to adapt them. The primary responsibility for the child should always be the classroom teacher. The teacher is the front line and all should flow from and through that person. This does not mean that the classroom teacher does everything for the child or works alone.

We need to be systematic and consistent (please see Exhibit 4) in our approach.

Step one: teachers', schools', parents' or students' observation of marked delays, or a gap between perceived potential and performance, and so on. This is where we begin, by trying to understand the big picture, finding that something is going wrong. The student is not meeting expectations.

We hold initial conversations with the child and his or her family. Often that is all we need. We find out that some temporary situation at home, such as the dog dying, is the culprit. I have always encouraged my teachers to do rotating contact phone calls throughout the year. What they do is phone three families from their class roster each night, three or four times a year. They talk about good stuff, or pass on a funny story. That creates an "open door" atmosphere with parents and it also makes it easier to phone about a problem. Many parents don't come to meet-the-teacher nights and open houses, or can't free themselves during the day to be part of a field trip, so creating that contact is important. The phone calls help to create rapport and issues can often be diffused just by talking.

Step two is the school-based team collaboration: staff sharing information. Our staff come to school-based team meetings with their homework done. (Please see Attachment 1.) There is no sense in wasting time. Our school-based teams meet every Monday morning from 8am to 9:30am. We allow 15 minutes maximum per student. I have seen school-based teams fall apart because they don't have a system. At our school we come in, we share information, talk about it, and decide what to do when we leave the room. It has to be practical and lead to intervention; otherwise, it is useless. The team will vary depending on the child we are dealing with, but there will always be:

- a member of the administration,
- the resource room teacher (who deals with children with delays of two years or more and typically sees the students on a daily basis),
- the learning assistance teacher for the program (who typically works with students on a six-week process to help them catch up or deal with a specific, short-term problem),

**A systematic approach to Special Education, Learning Disabilities & Learning Problems**

When dealing with special needs students, a school-based team (SBT) has often the difficult and sometimes overwhelming task of designing an individualized education program (IEP) that will assist in the remediation of the difficulties and attempt to narrow the delays identified using interventions with the least amount of disruptions to the learner, his teacher or the rest of his classmates. Where to start? The following ten categories can help focus the SBT's initial discussions.

**Preparedness**
State of preparation to attend school, Physical and Behavioral development

**Psycho-Motricity (Motor Skills)**
a) Gross
b) Fine Motor-Skills
c) Self-image
d) Temporal and Spatial Orientation

**Visual skills**
a) Vision
b) Perception
c) Visual Memory
d) Visual Motor Skills

**Auditory Skills**
a) Perception - attention, source identification/discrimination, figurelground & integration
b) Auditory Memory and Sequential Memory
c) Auditory Classification

**Reading**
a) Sensory Input/Output
b) Perception - knowledge of conventions & symbols, figurelground in decoding
c) Memory - auditory & visual memory, auditory & visual sequencing & memory for association

**Oral Skills**
a) Automaticity - articulation, vocabulary access, speech fluency and diction b) Conceptualization **of** rules - structure and grammar

Written **Skills**
a) Motor skills in handwriting, penmanship and control - copy skills
b) Concepts of systematic thought
(Dictation, Note taking, Creativity in expression, Grammar structure
c) Spelling - mechanics, conceptualization based on roots, letter-sound relationship

**Math**
a) Concepts of mathematics
b) Memory vs concept understanding
c) Processes, applications and problem solving
d) Organizational skills and work appearance

**Organizational skills**
a) Classroom and routines
b) Homework and project
c) Time management & organization

**Study Skills**
a) Following directions
b) Recall of rules and processes
c) Meta-Cognition

*A Changing Perspective Meeting the Needs of All Students, DEMERS, 1998*

Exhibit 5 A Systematic Approach to Special Education, Learning Disabilities & Learning Problems

- the school counsellor, and
- a speech-language pathologist.

These are the key members of the team. Then, of course, we add the classroom teacher and the parent.

Reading the file before coming to the school-based team meetings and bringing the file is a prerequisite. Some teachers say they won't read the file, because they do not want to be biased. I would not want to go to, say, a doctor who did not read my file. There is amazing information in a student's file that can help with interventions. You learn about interventions already done that were successful and, even more important, that were not successful. I do not want to see the same kids brought up each year with the same problems. There should be constant follow-up and progress every year on the child.

Then there is the form that must be filled out and submitted before the school-based team meeting and given to the team manager (please see Attachment 1). The form forces teachers to focus on what they really want to look at. Is it behaviour, French, English, etc?

Step three: Make strategies systematic enough that you can narrow interventions down, break them into smaller pieces. Set smaller and shorter-term goals. We have children with complex profiles whom we can't repair all at once. We have to address things one at a time. If you can just address holding the student's attention for the next lesson, that can be a goal.

How do we involve the children in this process? When I was a classroom teacher, my first step was to sit down with the child and chat. Find out what they think is fun about the class, what is frustrating, etc. Often it is as simple as the child being afraid to be asked a question in class. So the teacher could develop an understanding with the child that he or she won't ask him a question out of the blue, but, say, only if he or she is standing right in front of the child's row. That way the child can be prepared, reducing his anxiety. Often the child will volunteer to answer questions later.

We must make ourselves available to the students. This goes for us in any role. You have to have an open-door policy so that the students know they can come to you. If you create that environment and the child feels comfortable bringing concerns to you, then you can deal with their learning concerns most easily. Nevertheless, students also need to know that we are not omnipotent.

Taking a systematic approach to special education, learning disabilities and learning problems (please see Exhibit 5)—

Preparedness is important when dealing with children in Kindergarten. We need to remember that a difference of a few months at this age can mean a huge developmental difference. At least 85% of our resource room students and learning assistance students have October or November or December birthdays. So a first question to ask is the date of birth. If a child has a consistent delay of a few months, then we just have to address that as that child's profile. But the child who begins with a one year delay and is then delayed by two years or even three years is a different problem. When considering the issue of having a child repeat a grade, consider the long-term impact. Having children stay with their chronological age groups is preferable for all kinds of social and psychological reasons.

*Psycho-motricity.* Here we are talking about fine and gross motor skills as they relate to calligraphy or catching balls and walking. Self-image and temporal and spatial orientation can be problematic at early grades and at puberty.

*Visual skills.* The difference between vision and perception is very important. We can all see things, but we may not perceive the message we are supposed to. Many children have problems reading and it is because while they read from left to right, they borrow from lines above and below. It is not a vision problem as in seeing distance, but it is a serious vision problem for reading. That can sometimes be solved by having students read with a ruler or a window cut from paper.

*Auditory skills.* Very similar to visual skills. There is a big difference between hearing and understanding. I can hear the white noise in this room and it has been driving me crazy since I arrived. For some children it would be deafening and would become a more important stimulus than the teacher's voice. Noises in the hall or of cars driving by may also distract. Some learners need quiet. This can sometimes be provided through using old headphones. A simple intervention.

*Reading.* We are talking about the difference between reading and all of the paraphernalia around reading such as muscular vision, memory, and so on. Also, understanding the conventions such as that we read left to right, that spaces between words mean something and that punctuation adds understanding.

*Oral skills.* We already talked about the difference between associative and cognitive speech.

*Written skills.* Math disability is very rare. Most of the math disabilities we see are language-based problems. True math discalculates are quite rare. I have only seen two cases in my career. Most problems are delays or just an issue of language. In French immersion we are wondering whether it is the French or the math. If the students can come to the language understanding, they can often do the math.

*Organizational and study skills.* Disorganization is one thing many learning disabled students have in common. Disorganization is more than just mess, it is about knowing something is there but not being able to find it. We often assume that students have study skills and know how to do homework; many do not. All students need to be taught time management and homework. Half my staff needs to be taught time management! It is not an obvious thing or something that we are born with. Some people need colour-coding, some need post-its, etc. Somehow we have to be sure the information gets filed away and is retrievable, when needed.

These skills are still developing in the student. For example, reading doesn't happen just in Grade 1, we learn it over the course of life. We cannot assume that learning these skills earlier will mean we learn them better. These skills are on a continuum. Like building a house, you can't build the first floor before the foundation. The problems we deal with in the classroom are akin to missing a floor. In intervention, going back to the beginning to find out where the child is and building from there is important.

I want to speak briefly about central auditory processing (CAP), and problems with perceiving sounds. Sounds can be heard but not processed in the core part of the brain. Audiologists will often diagnosis these children as having background deafness. But often when you have the child in a one-on-one situation, the problem is not there. It is always in a group situation that CAP problems will show themselves. CAP is an important element to consider when choosing between a pull-out program and classroom support. You should always provide what that child needs, not what the school can provide. This is another big job for administrators—to ensure that this happens.

***Intervention.***

All of what we have spoken about today is worth nothing if we aren't going to do something about it. The school-based team's job is to give the classroom teacher something to do with the child, as soon they leave the meeting. This can happen in a variety of ways, complex or simple. I have given you a couple of sheets that we often use for what we call our "quickies' (Academic/Behavioural Profiles, please see Attachment 1). We staple these to the inside panel of the classroom file. Identifying strengths and needs is one of the most important things to do. Going through this list and highlighting the child's strengths and areas of needs will serve to give the teacher a quick reference. The modification column provides a quick reference of strategies. If the child is having trouble with oral expression, for example, verbal rehearsal may be an important strategy.

I have also handed out some draft pages from a book I am working on called Accommodations, Accommodations, Accommodations (please see Attachment 2). (Because I am an administrator and work on this in my free time, it has been in progress since 1996. It will be outdated before it becomes anything.) The excerpt describes the systematic approach as well as ways to avoid reinventing the wheel. The book is divided into three sections: Accommodations for Teaching, Accommodations for Learning, and Accommodations for Testing. Each section has a general accommodations section which contains generalizations. Following sections go into specific areas of need. So if a child has a need such as "visual perception", you can find that on page three. Here you will find options such as modifying general instruction, instructional modifications for reading/literature, spelling/writing, mathematics, social studies and science. These are all strategies within the visual perception section that you could be using. In the boxes are the tricks I have learned or borrowed over the years. You will notice that there are some blank bullets. This is a working document and the blanks are intended for you to fill in with your own ideas and learnings. The important part here is to understand that sometimes we can make accommodations in the environment or with the material learners use in order to help them "learn" the concept. Accommodations should come from school-based team collaborations. They should be kept simple and notes on their success or failure should be recorded on the learner's file.

This is a wonderful tool for the school-based team. Use it to discuss the interventions that have already been tried (what worked and what didn't work) and ones that could be tried. Sometimes what doesn't work with a child is even more important that what does in helping determine the child's learning style. Keeping track of the strategies by highlighting each with a date and success code becomes very important when doing special education in junior and senior high school, because when a child has six or eight teachers there is no time to get together. A paper trail that avoids every teacher in the team having to reinvent the wheel is

useful. The department head can play a role here in making sure the paper trail is in place for the special needs learners. (The child's Individualized Program Plan is also a useful tool for this purpose. It helps to keep track of where the child is, where the child should be, why the child needs assistance, what assistance is needed and who will do what to narrow the gap—including the home.)

Now, what about the question of transferring students out of French immersion to obtain learning assistance? I know someone who is completely deaf in one ear and has 20% hearing in the other ear. Anyone would say he should not have tried French immersion. However, he was in French immersion, from K–12, and did fine. He was completely motivated and did a super job. There are others who have what seems like the perfect profile for French immersion who shouldn't be there because they don't want to be there. We cannot find an answer to who should or shouldn't be in French immersion. There is no blood test and no educational test either. You cannot predict success in French immersion, but you can be as informed as possible.

Availability of learning assistance services is a primary factor. The services available from province to province and school to school vary widely. It should be the first question a parent asks when considering French immersion. Some schools have the right attitudes, the right personnel, and the right services (in French and English.) Other schools don't have what is needed to meet special needs of immersion students and the students would have to be transferred. If we are going to invest in a program and have hundreds of thousands of students across the country enrolled in it, we have to have the support for it. This is a political question, not a pedagogical one.

A school can staff the French track with French speakers, the English track with English speakers, and the special education track with people who care about kids. If they are bilingual, that is a bonus. I have seen schools do a fabulous job of helping French immersion students through an English resource teacher. Our philosophy is that when we have a problem learner in our school, we have a team that will help—no matter the track or type of problem.

The guidelines that are in the attached article (please see Attachment 3, "Learning Disabilities and French Immersion") are NOT a test. They are to guide discussion between schools and parents before enrolling their children in kindergarten. It is a big decision It is not a decision to be made at the reception desk when you arrive at the school to enrol your child It is a very serious decision because it is different. It takes more than thirteen years for a French immersion student to become bilingual. You can't yank them out in the middle or compare them with students in the English track. The parent has to understand where their child stands in their development. If French immersion causes problems, it will be due to motivation, auditory processing or memory difficulties. We are talking about a very demanding program, which everyone can do, but perhaps some shouldn't. Some aren't ready in Grade 1, but might be ready in time for late immersion.

We have done very successful transfers to the English program and we have done some horrible ones. Most of the horrible ones have been transfers for the wrong reasons. They were for students who had learning problems. We told the parents the children would continue having these problems after they switched to English and they did. Only sometimes is the stress of French too much for a child and this must be identified individually.

# Attachment 1

Glenayre Elementary School

SCHOOL BASED TEAM
COME TO THE MEETING FORM

STUDENT:_____ DATE:_____
TEACHER:_____ D.O.B.:_____
GRADE:_____

PARENTS CONTACTED: YES NO

| GOAL AREA | SKILL LEVEL | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| MOTOR SKILLS: | LOW HIGH | |
| Fine | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Gross | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| READING: | | |
| Word recognition | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Comprehension | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| LANGUAGE: | | |
| Oral | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Written | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Spelling | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Listening | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| MATH: | | |
| Computation | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Problem solving | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| SOCIAL/ EMOTIONAL: | | |
| Peers | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Adults | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| Problem solving | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| WORK HABITS: | P S G | |

***PLEASE BRING THE STUDENT'S FILE TO THE MEETING***

**GLENAYRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PREREFERRAL**
**Please fill out and return to Darlene Proulx before the SBT meeting.**

**Date of prereferral:** _____

**STUDENT:** _____

**Grade** _____ **Male:** _____ **Female:** _____ **Birthdate** _____
Year/month/day

**Classroom teacher(s)** _____

- **Teachers please read student's G4 file before the meeting**

**Informal assessment has been done by** _____

**in (academic areas)** _____ **date** _____

**Psycho-educational assessment has been done** **date** _____

**and/or**

**Observations (classroom, gym, outside) done by** _____
**(related to behaviour difficulties)** **date** _____

**Consultation with previous teacher(s)** ____, **administrator** ____ **or** _____

**Interventions already tried:** _____

_____

_____

_____

**Parents have been contacted by phone** _____ **in person** _____
**regarding concern(s) in the following area(s):**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **academic** | _____ | **behavior** | _____ | **speech/language** | _____ |
| **social** | _____ | **emotional** | _____ | **medical** | _____ |
| **other** | _____ | | | | |

**Reason for referral to SBT:**

_____ **would like ideas/suggestions; problem-solve with SBT**
_____ **referral (for testing, counselling, S-L, beh. team, etc.)**
_____ **would like additional or change in support for the student**
_____ **other:**

Student's name: _____
Date: _____
Teacher: _____

Please highlight appropriate modifications or write in those being attempted

| Strengths | Needs | ACADEMIC PROFILE | MODIFICATIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Work habits | Homework book |
| | | Work completion | Selective seating |
| | | Organizational Skills | Photocopying |
| | | Note taking | Buddy/Tutor |
| | | Concentration | More frequent testing |
| | | Attention span | Short and direct questions |
| | | Memory | Positive reinforcement |
| | | Frustration level | Modification: -extended time |
| | | Test taking | -oral |
| | | Exams | -adjust expectations |
| | | Oral expression | Verb rehersal and role playing |
| | | Written expression | More time, reduce volume |
| | | Reading comprehension | Computer, editing skills |
| | | Following directions: Oral | Repetition, clear and concise |
| | | Following directions: Written | Shorter, summaries |
| | | Spelling | Limited penalty |
| | | Handwriting | Encourage keyborading |
| | | Computation | Calculator |
| | | Problem solving | Manipulatives |
| | | | Cooperative learning |
| | | | weekly report |
| | | | Daily report |

| Strengths | Needs | BEHAVIOURAL/EMOTIONAL PROFILE | MODIFICATIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Responsible | Stress: positives/immediate |
| | | Cooperative with adult | positive feedback |
| | | Cooperative with peers | Peer tutoring clubs |
| | | Participation | Draw out at discussions |
| | | Activity level: - high | Selective seating/reduced external stimulus/structure routine |
| | | Activity level: - low | Structure routine |
| | | Distractible | Shorten assignments/imediate feedback/reduce stimuli |
| | | Impuslive | Role playing.verbal rehearsal |
| | | Eagar to please | |
| | | Temper outbursts | Low key response/ignore |
| | | Unduly anxious/tense | Encouragement/responsibility/ reassurance |
| | | Sense of humor | |
| | | Self-confidence | Positive reinforcement/praise |
| | | Reasonable expectations | Provide success |
| | | Attention seeking | Encouragement/teacher follow-up |
| | | Requests help appropriately | Limit teacher intervention |
| | | | Counselling |

Other:

_____
_____
_____
_____

# PROGRAMMING ALTERNATIVES FOR REGULAR CLASSROOM

TEACHER_____
DATE_____

STUDENT'S NAME

## CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION

Vary grouping
Large group instruction
Small group instruction
Individual instruction
Peer tutoring *
Independent self-instructional activities
Learning centres
Vary methods of instruction
Teacher-directed
Student-directed
Preferential seating
Unison or choral responding
Paired retelling
Cooperative learning approach

*with careful matching (average paired with marking low achievers)

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Vary graded systems
Homework
Tests
Class discussion
Special projects
Vary reinforcement systems
Praise
Notes sent home/office
Grades
Free time
Special activity
Progress charts
Tangibles
Vary rules
Differentiated for some students
Explicit/Implicit
Assign peer tutor
Schedule regular conference times
Structure
Clear, realistic expectations
Provide outlines of content
Provide key visuals for organization
Allow additional time for responding
Cueing - utilize both verbal and non-verbal cues

## METHODS OF PRESENTATION

Vary content
Amount to be learned
Time to learn new information
Conceptual level
Cumulative reviewing
Review general structure
Advanced organizers
Previewing questions
Cues, mnemonic devices
Provide immediate feedback
Involve students actively
Vary type
Verbal-lecture, discussion
Written tests, worksheets
Demonstration
Audiovisuals
Tape recorders
Filmstrips
Movies
Projectors
Transparencies
Encouraging the use of organizers - calendar, homework book
Ask student to repeat instructions
Explain purpose and expectations of lesson

## METHODS OF PRACTICE

Vary general structure
Amount to be practiced
Time for practice
Group/Individual
Teacher directed/independent
Items ranging from easy to difficult
Vary level of response
Copying
Recognition
Recall with cues
Recall without cues
Vary type of materials
Worksheets
Texts
Audiovisual equipment
Allow additional time to complete tasks
Reduce expectation for quantity of work
Encourage questions
Reinforce appropriate participation
Ignore inappropriate behaviour
Allow for use of photocopied notes
Calculator
Allow for dictated responses/notes
Taped books
Key visuals

## METHODS OF TESTING

Vary type
Verbal
Written
Demonstration

Vary general structure
- Group/Individual
- Amount to be tested
- Time for completion

Vary level of recognition
- Recognition
- Recall with cues
- Recall

Allow for sample or practice test

Allow for testing in small group situation (Resource Room)

Allow for open book testing

Provide assistance by reading instructions and questions

Allow for modification when marking

(HIGHLIGHT APPROPRIATE MODIFICATIONS)

# Attachment 2

Draft version 1.3. e-mail suggestions/comments to: demers@sfu.ca 1996©

# ACCOMMODATIONS •TEACHING Alternatives
# ACCOMMODATIONS •Facilitating LEARNING
# ACCOMMODATIONS •Alternative TESTING

## A handbook for Reasonable Classroom Interventions

**Daniel D. Demers**

The best way to ensure survival of both teachers and students dealing with special needs in the regular classroom, is through a consultative and systematic approach to intervention designs (IEP's). There are many reasonable accommodations and programming alternatives that can be put in place by classroom teachers within a regular classroom setting. This document proposes ways to modify home and classroom activities to achieve this goal.

The recommendations contained in this document are organized to create or support a systematic approach to dealing with learning disabilities and learning difficulties. Although it was designed especially with the regular classroom teachers in mind, it can also be used by resource room teachers, parents and students alike. Because the recommendations in the document are mainly process based, it can be also used with any language programs, such as French immersion or heritage language programs. The content of the document is based on the author's practical experience with intervention design in special education and regular classroom settings, and with years of school-based team collaboration.

Some of the ideas and strategies suggested in this document have been collected and adapted from various sources: from classroom practice, classroom teachers, district-based documents, school-based documents and, from books or commercial publications mentioned in the bibliography.

The document is organized in two parts: Part One provides suggestions for teaching, learning and testing alternatives for specific needs areas. These alternatives may easily be implemented by regular classroom teachers and their students. Recommendations are reasonable and quite simple to put into action. Part two of the document provides a glossary of intervention terminology used in Part One.

**Part One is divided in three sections:**

**A**: Teaching alternatives for the delivery of instruction. Within section A, accommodations and alternatives have been divided in five sub-categories. 1. **General accommodations**; 2. Accommodations for problems related to **visual perception**; 3: Alternatives used when designing instruction or interventions for learners with **auditory perception** problems; 4: When dealing with **fine motor skills** problems; and 5: Alternatives to deal with **organizational skills** difficulties.

All sub-categories of section A (except the first one, "General"), have been subdivided in academic subject areas such as Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies etc., in order to further facilitate the selection of alternatives for the classroom.

**B**: The second section of Part One, deals with 'learning' alternatives. How can students with learning disabilities or difficulties become more active participants in learning situations? This section is also divided in five sub-categories, general, written difficulties, oral/verbal difficulties, fine motor and organizational. It is important to involve the students as much as possible in the selection and the maintenance of the accommodations or interventions designs.

Finally, section **C**: Testing or evaluation alternatives, based on the same five areas of difficulties. This section provides regular classroom teachers with suggestions on how to modify formats or/and methods of testing and evaluating students' work. It guides teachers towards sound ways to evaluate learning outcomes rather than learners.

The alternatives and accommodations suggested in this document are in no way all inclusive. Following the philosophy of collaboration and consultation, blank spaces have been left in each section for the users to add their own modifications and suggestions. This document can be used as a resource member of the consultation team.

In Part Two of the document, a glossary of the terms used in Part One has been organized in alphabetical order to provide users (parents, students and teachers) with a short definition and some practical implications for each recommendations.

# A. TEACHING: Alternatives in the DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION

## 1. GENERAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Several accommodations will help most students with learning disabilities or with learning problems. These general modifications should structure an environment within which students can learn to become more autonomous and more successful in their everyday learning. It is how these accommodations and alternatives are used by students, teachers and parents that will lead to more autonomous learners, not the modifications themselves.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Multisensory | •Frequent review | •Hands-On |
| •Highly structured | •Format modifications | •Use of clues / hints |
| •Sequential / metacognitive | •Seating | •Webs / diagrams |
| •Provide organizers | •Mnemonic devices | •Peer Tutoring |
| •Key concepts previews | •Make it real | •More time |
| •Planner/Homework book | •Private signals/prompt | •Positive reinforcement |

## 2. VISUAL PERCEPTION DIFFICULTIES

Visual perception problems include visual (physiological), perceptual (discrimination, differentiation and integration) and visual memory difficulties. They can also include problems with gross and fine motor coordination, as well as spatial perception. Causes can be physiological, neurological or related to ADD/ADHD, motivation or developmental issues. The following instructional modifications will assist classroom teachers and school-based teams with the development of interventions (individualized educational programs, IEP's) designed to address the specific needs of individual learners.

### General Instructional Modifications

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Provide a clear copy | •Proximity seating / teaching | •Verbal with visual |
| •Visual focussing aids | •Oral directions | •Buddy reader |
| •Peer note takers | •Summary / key points | •Taped info |
| •Reduce visual distractions | •Near vs far copying | •Worksheets |
| •Color coding | •Visual clues/flags | •Copy of lecture notes |
| •Clear / concise directions | •Study carrels/dividers | •Clear writing |
| •Compare to/w model | •Teach proofreading | •Highlighted texts |
| •TV or Video presentation | •Allow more time | •Multisensory |

**Instructional Modifications for Reading / Literature**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Highlighting | •Introduce new vocabulary | •Give purpose |
| •Pairs | •Comprehension group discussions | •Peer reading aloud |
| •Color code vowels /patterns | •Label objects | •Webs |
| •Metacognitive training | •ID multisyllables | •Common error chart |
| •Illustrations of vocabulary | •Discuss written responses | •Context |
| •Multisensory instruction | •Underline key words | •Taped materials |
| •Extra time | •Parallel/Alternate reading work | •Reduce Work |
| • | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications for Spelling and Writing**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Post common errors | •Personal misspelled word lists | •Journal |
| •Story dictation/scribe | •Discuss & post synonyms | •Learning partners |
| •Brainstorm words | •Spelling requests | •Spelling / reading |
| •Reduce volume | •Tape recorded responses | •Tutor/editor |
| •Frame outline | •Allow proof reading | •Teach in sequence |
| •No penalty for spelling format | •Adjust expectation/weight | •Give choice of |
| • | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications in Mathematics**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Verbalize steps | •Key words / vocabulary | •Computation aids |
| •Group operations | •Exchange worksheets | •Fraction circles |
| •Spacing size modifications | •Distinguish operations | •Manipulatives |
| •Reduce work | •Model computations | •Peer helper/aide |
| • | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications in Social Studies / Science**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •More time / pauses | •Summarize & ask questions | •Review |
| •Adapt text (taped chapters) | •Controlled group work | •Multisensory |
| •Frame outline | •Teach to outlined framework | •Use agenda/planner |
| • | • | • |

## 3. AUDITORY PERCEPTION DIFFICULTIES

Auditory perception problems include difficulties with: perception (attention, source discrimination, differentiation and integration), auditory memory (including auditory sequencing of sounds), auditory classification and auditory association. Causes can be physiological (ear infections, middle-ear problems, chronic allergies) or any physical problems with the hearing apparatus. The source can also be developmental or neurological, as in central auditory processing (CAP) problems. The following

modifications will provide hints for users about structuring the learning environment to assist learners with auditory perception problems in general, and across four curriculum areas.

**General Instructional Modifications**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Preferred seating | •Short instructions/directions | •Speak more slowly |
| •Copy of notes | •Student repeats directions | •Circulate & assist |
| •Ensure student's attention | •Vary tone and pitch | •Quiet work area |
| •Key points on board | •Note taker | •Summarize with visuals |
| •Instruction clear/to the point | •Oral with written instructions | •Good handouts/outlines |
| •Teach listening skills | •Multisensory instruction | •Daily agenda checks |
| • | • | |

**Instructional Modifications in Reading / Literature**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Outline task / reading | •Provide listening center | •Visual / oral |
| •Stress visual phonic patterns | •Word families | •Good board skills |
| •Rimes & onsets | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications for Spelling and Writing**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Visual to print | •Group similar sound patterns | •Dictation |
| •Make personal dictionaries | •Limited or no penalty | •Choice of output |
| •Teach spell check programs | •Teach editing/proofreading skills | •More time |
| •Rimes & onsets | • | • |

**Instructional Modification in Mathematics**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Visual clues | •Example on sheets or board | •Flash cards |
| •Metacognition | •Manipulatives & symbols | • |
| •Steps for problem solving | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications in Social Studies & Science**

| | |
|---|---|
| •Worksheet guide for films & video | •Integrate skills training |
| •Audio-visual for introduction and summary | •Repeat directions |
| • | • |

## 4. FINE MOTOR SKILLS DIFFICULTIES

Fine motor skills problems include coordination (eye-hand, thought-hand, calligraphy and tying shoelaces-type activities). Problems related to fine motor also include temporal orientation and spatial orientation, which can affect cognition and finished products. The range

of severity varies from mild to severe. Causes of the problems can be developmental or neurological (synaptic connections). This section discusses modifications and accommodations often required when learners have to deal with fine motor skills problems. It is important to note that these problems are not usually corrected by extra practice of the fine motor activity.

**General Instructional Modifications**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Provide handwriting model | •Adjust expectations | •Paper placement |
| •Teach erasing | •Reduce copying activities | •Writing materials |
| •Spacing of letters | •Note taking | •Word processing |
| •Provide coach/tutor | •Allow extra time | •Allow choice for output |
| •Keep pencils sharp & long | •Sticky desk surface | •Writing pads not sheets |
| •Pens & Pencils with larger diameter | | |

**Instructional Modifications in Reading / Literature**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Word banks | •Manipulatives | •Peer helper |
| •Provide large print | •Reduce words on page | |

**Instructional Modifications for Spelling and Writing**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Provide purpose | •Talk through letter formation | •Tracing |
| •Skip lines | •Transition from print to cursive | •Color baseline |
| •Charts of letter formation | •Start and end points | •Directional cues |
| •Large motor writing activities | •Limited or no penalty | •Scribe/computer |

**Instructional Modifications in Mathematics**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Graph paper | •Vertically lined paper | •Calculator |
| •Modified expectations | •Keep pencil sharp | •Scribe |

**Social Studies & Science**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Modify map/chart work | •Permit word processing | •Controlled group work |
| •Scribe for lab reports | •Oral reports | •Core sections to complete |

# 5. ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS

Organizational skills deficiency is one of the most common problem affecting students with learning disabilities. Organizational problems may include: Problems in the area of time management, active reading, note taking and memorizing. Training in organizational skills is of great value to any student; it is of crucial importance to the survival of learning disabled learners. The following suggestions for modifications will provide guidance for teachers about structuring the environment of the learners with organizational difficulties in general, and across four curriculum areas. Study skills and time management programs can be purchased commercially, programs such as Skills for School Success (Archer & Gleason, 1990). It is important that organizational issues be taught and maintained systematically within curriculum content. Teaching these skills in isolation may not lead to the desired generalization of the skills across situations. It is important to review skills regularly when teaching and when giving feedback.

## General Instructional Modifications

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Routines | •Clear work areas | •Time to organize |
| •Homework book | •Short & clear directives | •Color coded subjects |
| •Dividers | •Reviews and summaries | •Workbook, 1 pg at a time |
| •Teach organization | •Choices from few to many | •Metacognition |
| •Cue to inferential thinking | •Uncluttered worksheets | •List steps for assignments |
| •Lists of required materials | •Block worksheets | •Visual of clock for due time |
| •Mnemonics | •Teach acronyms | •Teach self-monitoring |
| •Review daily | •Note taking webs/outlines | •Parental involvement |
| •Time frame calendar for long assignments | | •Clearly explain changes in routine |
| •From factual to abstract questions | | •Assignments posted in routine place |
| •Metacognition training | • | • |
| •Time for students to clear/tidy work area | | • |

## Instructional Modifications for Reading / Literature

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Purpose for reading clear | •Metacognition | •Study guide |
| •Teach warm-up of chapter/text | | • Teach skim & scan |
| •SQ4R (read,recite,review,reflect) | | • RCRC (see mnemonics) |
| •Teach note taking formats (main idea/details, idea diagram, webs, maps) | | |
| •Mnemonics (memory traps, acronyms, chaining, visualization, Pindar's trick, flashcards, ROOSTERS strategy) | | |
| • | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications for Spelling & Writing**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Preview activities | •Use sequence with comics | •Guide for structured writing |
| •Story starters | •Group stories | •Structure for reports |
| •Include question in answer | •Use margins | •Number answer sheets |
| •Teach topic, detail & closing sentences | | •Teach transition words |
| •Paragraphs (cause & effect, definition, contrasting, expository, narrative, descriptive) | | |
| •Teach steps of writing process (pre-writing, draft, edit, proofread, publish) | | |
| •Metacognition | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications for Mathematics**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Easy to hard | •Practice | •Provide feedback often |
| •Ensure basic skills are automatic (if not use table/calculator) | | •Use graph paper |
| •Model, showing steps | •Colour code formula | •Colour code worksheet |
| •Metacognition | •Use formula sheet | • |
| • | • | • |

**Instructional Modifications for Social Studies & Science**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Study guide questions | •Divide page for note taking | |
| •Use abbreviations | •Preview (warm-up) text for lecture | |
| •Review regularly | •Note key points | |
| •Recall new information | •Use multi-sensory methods (audio-visuals, food, objects) | |
| •Metacognition | •Use Outlines | •Colour Code |
| •Webs and charts | •Make it real | •Positive reinforcement |
| • | • | • |

## B. LEARNING: Alternatives to facilitate STUDENT PERFORMANCE

In many cases, simple alternatives can be put in place to assist student learning. The gift of time is often the best programming alternative a teacher or a parent can provide. The following section provides other reasonable accommodations.

**General Accommodations**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Additional support | •Buddy system | •Peer tutors |
| •Volunteers / aides | •Cooperative learning | •Instructional games |
| •Self-checking lists | •Chart progress | •Use mistakes to teach |
| •Allow explanation of work | •More time | •Multi-modal response |
| •Effective questioning | •Scaffolded questioning | •Metacognition |
| • | • | • |

**Accommodations for Difficulties with Written Expression Problems**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Allow more time | •Use of short answers | •Stress accuracy |
| •Class time to work | •Specific feedback | •Regular feedback |
| •Journals | •Check with a model | •Answer fewer questions |
| •Modify original task | •Proofread | •Skip lines in drafts |
| •Oral reports | •Proofread draft | •Response cards |
| •Tape record answers | •Pictures with written work | •Reduce requirements |
| •Metacognition | •Ask for help | •Make a plan |

**Accommodations for Difficulties with Verbal Expression Problems**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Extra time | •Hints | •Rate oral reports |
| •Projects | •Notes with oral reports | •Visual with oral reports |
| •Read silently then orally | •Small group discussion | •Written instead of verbal |
| •Response cards | •Specific questions | •Tape oral reports |
| •Ask for help | •Allow for practice run | •Allow extra time |

**Accommodations for Difficulties with Fine Motor Skills**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Keep pencils long & sharp | •Ask for help | •Use models provided |
| •Use pens & pencils with larger diameter | | •Use word processor |
| •Use rubber mat to stabilize paper | •Use word banks | •Ask for copies |
| •Ask for alternative output format | •Use graph paper | •Allow for extra time |

**Accommodations for Difficulties with Organizational Skills**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Use learning strategies | •Use mnemonics | •Keep lists |
| •Maintain daily planner | •Learn note taking skills | •Ask for help/support |
| •Establish realistic timelines | •Plan with a friend/coach | •Establish routines |
| •Review within 24 hours | •Rewrite notes | •Use "To Do" lists |
| •Organize colour coded system | •Plan ahead | •Do chapter warm-up |
| •Read aloud | •Write question in answer | |

## C. TESTING: Alternatives in measuring STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Special considerations for assessment are presented in this section. It is important to provide students with testing situations that will sample their learning, not their test taking abilities. Stress and processing difficulties can seriously affect the outcome of certain tests. To be fair means providing individual students with what they need, not, giving all

students the same thing. Feedback to students must be summative and formative.

**General**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •No distraction seating | •Key words | •Possible questions |
| •Frequent quizzes | •Read test to student | •Special seating |
| •Credit participation | •Small group testing | •Reduce anxiety |
| •Avoid "pop" quizzes | •Survey test | •Untimed tests |
| •Partial credit | •Test objectives | •No surprises |
| •Open book | •Test same as teaching method | •Short tests |
| •Check samples | •Teach skills for success | •Inform time allotted |
| •Aides to read and explain questions (not answers) | | •Demonstration |

**Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Written Expression**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Tests with less writing | •Write on test | •Accept print or cursive |
| •Allow word processing | •Alternative response mode | •Allow webs/diagrams |
| •Grade content vs mechanics | •Allow scriber | •Outline vs paragraph form |
| •Manipulatives & pictures | •Oral exams | •More time |
| •Vary level of recognition (recall with clues) | | •Limited or no penalty |
| •Test format same as teaching format | | •Reduce volume/expectation |

**Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Verbal Expression**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Drawings with verbal response | •More time | •Tape recorded answers |
| •Oral answers in different setting | •Allow alternative/parallel response mode | |

**Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Fine Motor Skills**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Allow scriber | •Ensure pencils are long & sharp | |
| •Clear test format | •Post prompts or models | •Clear desk surface |
| •Have eraser available | •Reduce writing | •Give directional clues |
| •Allow alternative output format | •Provide Graph paper | •Allow adequate time |

**Test Modifications Addressing Difficulties with Organizational Skills**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| •Clear desk area | •Write acronyms out | •Set timelines |
| •Colour code test sections | •Read through test first | •Easy to hard |
| •Advise remaining time | •Establish test routines | •No surprise tests |
| •Review memory tricks before test | •Ensure supplies are available | •Establish sequence |
| •Test in same format as taught | •Give time to organize | •Clear test format |

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# Attachment 3

# CPF Manitoba

Canadian Parents for French NEWS

VOLUME 13, ISSUE NO. 1 February, 1994

***Manitoba French-Language Students do Well in Cross-Canada Math Tests***

## Learning Disabilities and French Immersion: When to Transfer; When not to Transfer?

By: Daniel Demers

We all wish for the magic formula or test that would provide us with an objective answer to the question of potential success in the French Immersion program. The fact remains that each and every case has to be evaluated individually. Although this evaluation can be quite subjective, there is a systematic way to look at available information and make an informed decision on the subject.

To start with, look at the child from a subjective perspective and go through a checklist of what I have found to characterize successful and unsuccessful students in French Immersion. By going down this list I can come up with a profile that can quite accurately predict how well the child will succeed in this fairly demanding program. However, this by itself does not mean that a change of placement will give the desired results. *(see list on page four).*

Any decision to change the placement of a child must be in the interest of the child, not of the program, the parents or the teachers.

It is important when making a decision to remember that in many cases, a transfer to the native language program will not lead to the elimination of the learning frustrations. Furthermore, it may have negative effects on an already fragile self-image. Our objective is to strive to service all students in the second language. We must, however, remember that in some cases, however few, a transfer to the English program would be beneficial and would reduce some of the debilitating frustrations felt by some leaders. The question here is who do we transfer, why and when? *(con't page 4)*

## Dispelling the Myth...

In 1993, a test was formulated under the guidance of the Council of Ministers of Education to measure the Mathematic skills of Canadian students and determine their preparedness for a global economy and life-long learning. Each province verified that the test provided a good match with its curriculum objectives.

Skills tested were in content (numbers, operations, algebra and functions, measurement and geometry, data and statistics) and problem-solving strategies. Each skill was tested at five different levels.

The results: overall, Canadian students had a disappointing level of Math skills. However, those tested in French showed a higher skill level than those tested in English. In Manitoba, French Immersion students made up 77% of the 13-year olds and 73% of the 16-year-old French-speaking students tested. The French second-language students performed at a higher level than their peers in the English program. Their results were higher than the national average in both content and problem-solving.

Why is this? Could it be that the teachers are doing a more thorough job of teaching math in French, or is it a question of focus? When children are learning Math in French do they pay more attention to the meaning of the words and thus are better able to interpret the questions?

One point is clear: the myth that anglophone children cannot learn Math concepts in their second language has been dispelled. If they are given good quality French immersion programs, the children's math skills are likely to be as good or better than in an English-language program.

Our responsiblity as parents is clear: to keep encouraging the schools to provide good quality programming in all subjects in French, including Math and Sciences.

### Characteristics of Second Language Learning

First of all, we must identify the characteristics of the second language acquisition, to understand and appreciate the difficulties this learner must face and overcome. This information can then be used to modify existing programs, design measuring tools that will identify, evaluate and assist in the early detection of the difficulties and develop the appropriate remediation programs to assist students. Language acquisition is an ongoing process, and usually imply life-long refinements. Focus on the learner, anticipate deficiencies and promote meta-cognitive process of acquisition and memory organization for a more efficient recall of stored knowledge.

Although it is assumed that there are underlying deficient skills in students with learning disabilities, we must use caution in the testing of this population. One thing is certain, the protocol for evaluation of a learning disabled child in the French Immersion program will differ from the evaluation of the regular program students or the francophone students. No one appears to have the magic answer as to what tool to use. Each and every case warrants a different protocol of evaluation. The wrong diagnosis will lead to inefficient remedial methods and become only a waste of precious time for both the teacher and the student. It remains that, to accurately test the French Immersion students, we need more research specific to the assessment of that bilingual population. Valid and reliable assessment would need to account for the relative importance and possible interactions of cognitive and linguistic variables across language. It would also need to include developmental aspects of age related variables. Since none of the French only tests or the English only tests seem to reliably inform us of the deficiencies of the immersion students over time (Lapkin, 1984) we must be careful not to label a child with the inappropriate measure.

Some delays are expected in French Immersion programs, particularly in areas such as English spelling. However, researchers such as Genesse (1979) believe that the gap is narrowed by grade 5 or 6. These delays show in the testing as deficiencies, not as delays. When a model of evaluation becomes available, it will become much easier to set remedial instruction objectives and easier to attain them. Meanwhile, *strategy teaching* can alleviate some of the difficulties experienced by learners in the French Immersion program.

### Who Should Transfer?

Are there certain students that would benefit from a transfer to the regular English programs? The answer to this question is certainly **yes**. But who? When? And who decides? Sometimes, the answer is **no**! Now the BIG question: which ones should remain and which ones should be transferred? The preceding information has provided us with the profile of a learner that would experience incredible stress in French immersion: an auditorily deficient student.

Prior to making such an important (and usually irreversible) decision, one must evaluate many facets of a child's profile. A good indicator of potential success of a child in second language acquisition has always been the level of **competence in the child's native language** (L1). The acquisition of a second language (L2) is facilitated by the systems established when language was originally developed by the learner in L1. These skills are then used to transfer and make generalizations in L2 acquisition and language development in general. If L1 is weak to start with, the acquisition of L2 will be affected in so far as building on a weak base leads to a shaky structure. This further highlights the importance of parental involvement in pre-school activities such as interactive reading and natural oral correction in the child's first language.

A second measure, one often overlooked by the schools and the parents of LD children, is the actual **level of frustration** that a student exhibits in his or her learning environment. An unmotivated child is often a frustrated learner.

Then, there is the decision to transfer a child, based on the belief that he or she will do better in the alternative

| The successful student in French Immersion | The unsuccessful student in French Immersion |
|---|---|
| • is verbal, likes to talk | • is often a reluctant speaker |
| • imitates easily | • imitates with difficulty |
| • self-corrects | • doesn't notice errors |
| • experiments without fear of making mistakes | • often fears making mistakes |
| • is exposed to many models of good modeling (at home, in the community and in school) | • poor modeling environment (at home,in the community and in school) |
| • readily accepts challenges | • has a defeatist attitude |
| • shows strengths in first language | • often has poor first language skills |
| • trusts | • mistrusts |
| • is usually attentive and focussed | • often is inattentive and unfocussed |
| • is willing | • is often unwilling |
| • has good auditory discrimination | • has poor auditory discrimination |
| • has good memory and good meta-cognitive awareness | • has poor memory and poor meta-cognitive awareness |
| • has determined parental support and convinced parents | • often has unconvinced parents, and unprepared or unwilling to help |

program. This can prove to be a grave error. I have often seen the learning disabled child perform no better in the English program even after going through the trauma and personal embarrassment of the transfer.

## Profile of the Frustrated Learner

There seems to be **a student with a particular profile** that tends to do poorly in French Immersion. This learner tends to be less frustrated after a transfer in the English program. It is therefore important to discuss this learner before making a final decision.

Strengths or weaknesses in certain abilities can be good predictors to identify potential stresses or facilities to be encountered in the acquisition of a second language. When the difficulties have been identified as being mainly in the 'performance' tests, we find that the students with these profiles usually show no major improvements when transferred into the English Program if their school has a French learning remedial center. It is believed that students with a test profile showing verbal strengths, in areas such as short term memory, reasoning and auditory skills, and showing lower scaled scores on other measures such as visual comprehension, perception and other visual and performance focus, can usually work successfully in a modified French Immersion program with remediation sessions, in either a pull-out or in-class support service with an individualized educational program (IEP). Our candidate for transfer to the English program is a student with low scores in the area of verbal and auditory sub-tests of psycho-metric measures. Although this is certainly no magic test, it appears to reduce the inappropriate transfer and gives some of our less gifted learners a chance to achieve functional bilingualism. This method applies mainly to schools that provide learning assistance services (*l'orthopédagogie*) in French and in English. **Without the proper support services, the learning disabled student will be unable to remediate and circumvent some of his learning disabilities.**

In conclusion, there appears to be three main indicators, to look at, or evaluate, before transferring or enrolling a student with learning disabilities in or out of a French Immersion program. **First**, a subjective review of the successful and non successful characteristics list, with the goal, amongst others, of establishing the level of success the student has achieved in his or her own native language. **Secondly**, the personal dedication and motivation of the student, not the parents, to be in, or to remain in the program. **Finally**, certain students with learning disabilities can still be successful in the French Immersion Program, without undue frustrations, if their learning disabilities fit a certain profile. This profile puts their learning disabilities, or their poor scores on testing mainly in the area of non verbal and non auditory sub-tests. Testing for auditory discrimination is critical in second language assessments. We can only imagine the stress one would experience when dealing with a program that relies, almost exclusively, for the first few years, on oral communication, sound discrimination and sound production when the child experiences auditory dysfunction.

## Importance of Learning Style and Self-Image

Finally, we must remember that the remediation of learning disabled students must include *the teaching of coping strategies and skills* that they will need to deal with their learning disabilities and the unusual way they have to learn and memorize language concepts. We all know, learning disabilities don't go away, but when the appropriate training or re-education is done, many learning disabled students can circumvent their problems, by using alternative learning strategies. One more important thing to remember, is their memory and recall difficulties. It varies greatly from child to child, from mild recall impairment to severe deficiencies. This issue must be addressed in the design of each and every individualized educational program. If our goal is to keep the students in the program, we must create remediation programs that address the learning process using curricula as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Chances are that if we create success for them, they will remain in the programs.

The most important issue is, of course, *the self-image of the child*. This must be addressed to ensure good motivation levels, and constant effort from the learner. It is also important to discuss, in realistic terms, the actual concept of learning disabilities with the students. We should also educate the students and the teachers of our schools about learning disabilities and the learning disabled learner. I have seen the sigh of relief of so many students when they find out that having a learning disability does not mean they are stupid, thus clearing the way for successful remediation. Self-evaluations and close scrutiny of individuals can often uncover underlying strengths, which in turn can be used to great advantage. These strengths have a two-fold advantage, they perform great magic in building self-image, and, the strengths can often be used to deal with some of the weaknesses.

We often believe that all our students should be performing at the same level. This belief is certainly not limited to the French Immersion classes. Let's carefully consider the learner before making far-reaching decisions.

*"Imagine how quiet the forest would be if only the best birds sang".*

### About the Author:

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***Note from the Editor***: The above article is a summary of an original 6000 word article. The complete original article plus bibliography can be obtained from Canadian Parents for French (MB) 222-6551 or the Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba (LDAM) 774-1821.

# Learning Assistance Within French Immersion
## The Experience of Two Districts

**Carmen Mykula**
Classroom teacher and French Language Facilitator, Parkland SD

**Anne Shillington**
School Counsellor, École Queen Street School, (Spruce Grove), Parkland SD

**Angèle Aubin**
French Immersion Disabilities Teacher
Holyrood School, Edmonton Public School Board

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation(s) and includes relevant overheads and handouts where available. This material has been reviewed and approved by presenter(s) for publication.

Back in the 80s, when there was a lot of money, we had a resource room teacher at Queen Street. How wonderful that was for our staff and our students who needed the extra assistance. She was full-time and she would take the students on a pull-out basis. We called this Management by Specialist. There were lots of advantages to that approach: the problem was out of the classroom, the classroom teacher knew that student was being looked after, the pressure was off the classroom teacher, the classroom teacher didn't have to worry about how the student was receiving the extra help. The limitation, though, was that it was hard for the classroom teacher to bring the student back and make the student fit in where she should be with the rest of her peers. We also saw that it was hard on the students because they felt, "Oh man, why am I being pulled out." And sometimes they didn't want to go because they felt they were being pulled out of the classroom because there was something wrong with them.

But with the budget cutbacks, the money just wasn't there anymore. So we wondered what to do. We thought that we would just relocate these students to the English program. That's where they should be, right? They can't remain in the French immersion program if they have learning difficulties so we'll relocate them. So for our purposes today we're calling that solution Management by Relocation. But management by relocation didn't work. Sending them to the English program didn't fix their problems. They still had those same difficulties.

So now we have a dilemma. We have no money, so we can't get that specialist back, and we still have the French immersion philosophy that says we need to provide immersion instruction to all our students. So we need to do something different.

At Queen Street we were struggling for a name for what we do now. We did Management by Specialist; we tried Management by Relocation. What we are doing now we would call Management by Creative Teamwork (MCT). Our MCT process at the school is made up of four

**MCT**

**REFERRAL COUNCIL**

- is a school-based team approach
- considers student strengths/ difficulties
- results in an action plan

steps: the Referral Council, Assessment, Program Planning and Implementation, and Evaluation and Monitoring.

The first step is something that at our school we call "Referral Council". It's called a lot of different things in many different districts. But referral council is basically the foundation, the cornerstone of our process. It's a school-based, team approach to dealing with student difficulties.

We set aside an hour after school one day a week to deal with student referrals based on the student referral form (please see Attachment A). The form is a simple two pager, which is as stress-free for the teachers as we could make it, so they didn't have to do a lot of writing. It covers the common difficulties and common strengths of children that tend to be referred, lists their observations, what has been tried so far, what has been successful, and most importantly, the question the teacher wants answered by the end of the meeting.

We try not to meet for more than 15 or 20 minutes on any child. Generally the referring teacher, the principal, sometimes the assistant, the school counsellor and any other staff member who has a lot of contact with that child will be at the meeting. We just brainstorm about the child. We look at the file, we talk about strengths and difficulties. But the key is that before we leave we want to make sure that we have an action plan in place. Just a simple action plan of what are we going to try. It's not going to be exhaustive; it's just our first steps. What are we going to do? Who is going to do it? By when? And usually we try to put a review date. When we are going to get together again? More often than not, step one of the action plan is to meet with the family to chat about what needs to happen next.

Now to bring our process to life for you a little bit, we've chosen to illustrate the different steps in our program by using a case study: a student at our school this year.

**MCT**

**ASSESSMENT**

- Counsellor (in both languages of instruction)
- Speech Therapist
- Reading Specialist

This particular child is now in Grade 4. When she was in Grade 2, we began noticing that this child was stressed, was anxious. By the end of Grade 2 she had difficulty reading. She couldn't read *Le* and *Je* and those little kinds of words that she should be reading by then. She felt sick, she didn't want to come to school. By mid-Grade 3 we're really concerned. So we meet with the parents. They've noticed these things, of course, at home. We tell them we would like to assess her.

More often than not assessment is the second step in the process. Assessment could mean a lot of different things. It could be informal classroom observation. It could be a bit more formal type of assessment where I'm doing some actual direct testing. Or sometimes we need to call in some external experts.

Generally we want to establish their level of intellectual functioning, so we know what we are working with. We traditionally use the WISC III, an intelligence scale for children. We generally give that in English. We want to ensure that we're not working with a child who is

significantly delayed in terms of cognitive ability. We also generally give some visual motor type tests, and receptive/expressive language measures.

We want to assess a child's level of academic achievement in both languages. So for this child we used a French language measure, the FIAT, to test her reading and decoding comprehension of spelling, and in English as well. Sure enough with this particular child, she was presenting with really strong cognitive ability, this is a bright kid. She had at least average ability verbally and exceptional ability in the non-verbal area in terms of her ability to work with space and shapes and puzzles. The academic test showed this child was significantly delayed compared to what we would expect based on both her level of cognitive ability and her grade placement.

We found a little bit of an articulation delay when she pronounced words, so we had a speech therapist come in and do a bit more work with her. Keep in mind that the speech therapist has no background in French at all so this would have all been English language testing. She picked up that there was some difficulties with what we would term phonemic awareness, her ability to connect symbols on the paper to sounds and make all the right associations.

We knew she was reading below grade level but how was she reading, what kind of strategy was she using? We called in our district reading specialist to do some work with her. Again this would have been in English because we don't have a French reading specialist in our district. But we were able to get some clues about how this child processed print on the page and how she was connecting with it. We found that she was basically going letter by letter. She wasn't really using meaning, and a lot of other things like that.

Some of the other things we noticed with the child was that she was very low in taking risks, her confidence was in the cellar. In spelling, she would write one letter and then she would leave a blank and then maybe write another letter. She would never attempt to put in any vowel sounds or anything like that.

In sum, this child presented with a classic, language-based learning disability.

Step three in our process is program planning and implementation. We always start with a parent meeting. We go through all the results and what it means for the child and what we are going to do about it. In this particular case, as is often with French immersion kids, this is the point where the parent says right away, "We should take him out of French immersion, right?" But in this particular case we were surprised! The parent said, "I want her to stay in immersion." So management by relocation was not an option. The parents and the child were strongly committed to the French immersion program. So out of our meeting came an individual program plan (IPP) to meet the child's learning needs within the French immersion context.

In her case, her IPP for the remainder of the Grade 3 year had a teaching assistant coming into the classroom to help her read some of the Science and Social Studies materials, which were written way above her reading ability, having a teaching assistant scribe, or write down, her answers to tests because this child doesn't have enough written language ability, even though she knows all the stuff. We had the classroom teacher spend extra time with her by

having the principal and the counsellor cover the class during silent reading time. The speech therapist took her for her two sessions a week for work on phonemic awareness. We also had her doing some paired reading in English with an older partner.

**How it works in the classroom....**

- TA Assistance in/out of classroom
- Peer reading buddy
- French monitor
- Teacher
- Home Support
- In *this* case, *extremely* strong student commitment

Because we were able to put a program plan in place, we were able to apply for and receive some provisions for this child on the Provincial Achievement Tests. So when it came to the end of the year she was able to write her provincial achievement tests in Math and LA with a scribe, a reader, and extended time limits. This kid blew the top off the test. She performed at the high end of the acceptable range, into the excellence range in Math. She's just a real math whiz. So it has been exciting. But that takes us to September 1999.

In September 1999 the school had a 4/6 combined class, but we have the support of the school, and a teacher's assistant who is bilingual. She's in the classroom for 70-minute blocks in the morning and in the afternoon, 3 days a week.

The teaching assistant works with this child in the classroom and out of the classroom. But we mostly have the child in the classroom because we like to have her with us in the context of what we are doing and in a group with the TA. The self-esteem of that little girl has gone way up because she is not feeling out of place, she's not being pulled out. She spends less than a third of the time out of the classroom to do some quiet reading or some very specific tasks.

We were working on a computer integration project in language arts one time. The activity was advanced for her but she insisted that she wanted to do it. My expectations, of course, were lower than they would be for the rest of the students. But she worked on the computer with the teacher's assistant. It wasn't long before the assistant said to me, "You know what? She's telling me what to do on the computer!" So the assistant does the typing for her and helps her read. But she has a yearning for learning.

We also put her with a reading buddy. This little girl is thrilled to read with her, so there is lots of paired reading that goes on—in the hallway, out of the hallway, in the classroom. We also had a French monitor this year who came once a week. When all three of these supports—teacher's assistant, reading buddy, and monitor—are available in the classroom, the program plan works, even in a 4/6 split. As well, of course, we have the teacher working with her.

**MCT**

**Ongoing Evaluation & Monitoring**

- Progress is monitored.
- Reassessment occurs.
- Program plan is adjusted accordingly.

The home support is awesome. There's just no question

that this little girl is going to go through the French immersion program. And, in this case, we have extremely strong student commitment. It takes a lot of hard work to keep a student in French immersion under these circumstances. But we have all the cards in our favour, because we have the TA who is bilingual, who is working with us; we have the support in school; we have the parental support and that little girl wants to learn. She doesn't want to go outside at recess. She wants to stay in and keep learning, she wants to get ahead. She doesn't want to be behind. So she is self-motivated. That's the key, especially in our 4/6 situation.

Step four in our process is ongoing evaluation and monitoring to make sure that the child progresses. We have a couple of structures in place for doing that formally. We meet twice a year to formally review the individual program plan—again what we do is have a relief teacher come into the school so that we can sit down as a team during the school day and talk about where the child is at, what kind of progress has been made, what the stumbling blocks are. We can also talk about what we need to adjust and change for the next few months until we meet again. We develop the IPP usually toward the end of September or the first couple of weeks of October. We review about January or February. Then we review again near the end of May, or early June. More informally, and sometimes anecdotally, we are constantly reassessing.

We just reassessed this particular student. We'd like to say we've cured her, that she is reading at her grade level, but, no, it's not a miracle. There is some slow steady progress in some areas. She hasn't backslid; she hasn't stood still; she is moving forward. There are a couple of areas where she really took off. Her French reading decoding all of a sudden has just jumped. Why that particular skill we're not quite sure. Her English language reading comprehension has really moved upward and her spelling, although her score didn't change on the test, has really changed. It used to be consonant, blank, blank, blank, consonant but now she is attempting to put in all the sounds. The approximations are getting closer, and she is trying. Before she would just say she couldn't. We can't measure all the things about this child—she is taking risks, she doesn't have as many tummy aches to take her away from school all the time. We've still got lots of work ahead of us, but we know we're on the right track with her. The parents know that this is a long-term process, that we have no magic here.

**Ongoing Challenges...**

- Scheduling of Teacher Assistant Time
- Availability of FI Resources
- Helping other professionals to understand the FI philosophy and process
- Building teacher confidence
- Supporting parents in their decision to remain in FI
- Continuity from year to year

There are challenges, though. One is the scheduling of our TA, sharing her with the English program. She does the FI Kindergarten as well so Tuesdays and Fridays she is not available. She also works with the grade 3/5 split class, so she is very much in demand. Another challenge is the availability of FI resources that are at the child's grade level. We've been fortunate in that we belong to MERFIP (Metro Edmonton Regional French Immersion Programs group). We've used some of the information and books that have been labelled for the Early Literacy Initiative in French, a list of high interest, low vocabulary material from Edmonton Catholic Schools.

One of the key challenges is finding appropriate external assessment. There is someone in Calgary who does some types of assessment *en français*, but in our area our district reading specialists or school speech therapists don't have any background in French immersion philosophy. So when they determine children are having articulation difficulties and phonemic awareness difficulties in their mother tongue, guess what their first recommendation is? "Quickly, as fast as you can, get them out of French immersion." When they ask how they are doing in English and we explain that they haven't had English yet because they are only in Grade 2, the specialists have difficulty understanding. So that is an educational issue to address: we need to work with our external consultant and specialists to help them understand the philosophy and the process and that it's not a horrible thing to hold off the English until Grade 3.

Building teacher confidence in handling children with special learning needs is a major challenge in a school. We need to provide lots and lots of support to a teacher. The school counsellor helps them with the IPP development and setting up the reviews, and giving them TA time and giving them ideas. Fall transition meetings are held to maintain continuity for the child from the previous year. We don't want teachers to feel they're alone, especially with all the combined classes and challenges they are facing with the new curriculum.

Yet another challenge is supporting parents in their decision to stay in French immersion. We said the first question tends to be, "OK, so we should change out of French immersion, right?" But we tell them we should talk about it further. That may be one of the things we need to look at, and if parents really request it, we'll honour that request. But often the child can stay in the program and be successful if there is support from home.

In summary then a new student brings different needs, different strengths and a new brainstorming session. What worked for this little girl may not work for a another student. So we are back to that creative teamwork effort, and the referral council. And determining what can we do for this new child.

**[Angèle Aubin]**

The things that I hope to share with you today are:

- how the Learning Disabilities French Immersion Program came to my school,
- the teacher training involved in this program,
- the criteria for entering and leaving the program,
- the components of the program,
- the results of this LD program in French, and
- the advantages as I see them.

The French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program came into existence in June 1996. Edmonton Public had a new superintendent at that time, Dr. Emery Dosdall, who truly believed that every child should be educated in the public system. He proposed projects such as Quantum Leap, where schools could explore ways of improving student achievement. Some schools looked at modifying the school year. Schools were asked to think outside the box to find ways to improve student achievement. So it was within this climate that the LD program in French immersion came into being. It was also a time when middle management was eliminated from our school board structure. Principals reported directly to the superintendent.

My principal at the time, Merv Lastiwka, spoke to the board to request a pilot project. Initially Merv requested a two-year pilot project to see if it was possible to work with students with learning disabilities and keep them in the French immersion program. Faye Parker, Anne Louise Charette, and Bruce MacIntosh of Edmonton Public School's central staff prepared the initial report. Nadia Rousseau from Faculté Saint-Jean also came on board at that time. She was to gather qualitative information from students and parents of the program.

The rationale for the pilot project was the requests from parents who wanted their children to stay in French immersion even though they needed assistance for a learning disability. The parents had been asking for this program and the principals of the immersion sites had been asking for it.

Edmonton Public has had English LD sites since about 1984. These are designated sites where, once the child is identified as having a learning disability, the child can get assistance with the necessary additional funding. The intent of these programs is to reintegrate the child as quickly as possible back into the regular program. The general practice at Edmonton Public until then had been to recommend that children who had identified special needs not enrol in French immersion, or if they were already in French immersion it was often recommended that they leave the program and go into English. That practice exists at many schools and school boards because they haven't got the resources to support these children in French immersion. There was debate on whether this was the best practice for students with learning disabilities. (Please see box: The Debate)

Before we sought approval of the pilot project, we

## THE DEBATE

Those who advocate removing students with learning disabilities from French immersion, present the following arguments:

- Most learning disabilities exhibit themselves as language processing difficulties and are evident in problems with reading, writing and spelling.
- Learning a second language places an additional burden of time and effort on a student who is experiencing difficulties in acquiring academic skills.
- Learning a second language may further confuse and frustrate a child who is having difficulty in learning one language effectively because the phonemic and syntactic systems of French and English are quite different, and some learning strategies are not applicable in both languages.
- Inter-linguistic interference may make intervention less effective.

Those who advocate the provision of intervention in French as well as English, advance the following points:

- Learning disabilities are neurological in origin, and not caused by the educational context, so that being in French immersion will not make the disabilities worse.
- Intervention provides coping strategies, and coping strategies can be taught in both languages.
- Removing children from French immersion because they have learning difficulties is damaging to their self-esteem because they perceive that they are not "smart enough" to learn French.
- Students in the francophone school system are not removed from English classes if they have learning difficulties.
- Some parents of children with learning disabilities do not wish to deprive their children of the opportunity of learning French.

## Timeline

1993-1996 Requests from parents and principals for a new option for French Immersion LD students ( Emie Jurkat )

June 11, 1996 Request for pilot project: Learning Disablities French Immersion Program (Bruce McIntosh, Anne-Louise Charette. Faye Parker, Merv Lastiwka)

September 1996- June 1997 First French Immersion LD class. 12 students. (4 boys, 8 girls) Grades 3 and 4

September 1997- June 1998 Grade 4 and 5

Feb. 10, 1998 Recommendation that the establishment of a French Immersion Learning Disabilities Program begin in the 1998-99 school year be approved. ( Bruce McIntosh, Anne-Louise Charette, Faye Parker, Nadia Rousseau, Merv Lastiwka, Angele Aubin)

September, 1999 New group of thirteen students in Grades 3 and 4 start program at Holyrood

February, 2000 Twelve students are assessed to determine if they continue to meet the criteria for the program. None of them do.

September 2000 Undetermined number of students at Grade 3,4,5 level

gathered quite a bit of information. Edmonton Public Schools conducted a telephone survey in the spring of '96. There were 51 parents whose children had been in French immersion or were still in French immersion and also had learning disabilities who Edmonton Public Schools attempted to contact. The staff were successful in contacting 21 of these 51. Of the 21 parents contacted, 19 chose to transfer their child out of French immersion to access a LD program. But 14 of those 19 would have chosen to leave their child in French immersion if they could have received intervention in French and English. So already that was telling us that there was a base there of parents who really would have made other choices had the options been available. Eighteen of those 19 parents were supportive of the idea of the district establishing a LD program in French immersion.

In June 1996 we went to the board. The French Immersion LD program was recommended as a pilot project to allow the school district to be responsive to parental desires, while examining the effectiveness of such an approach for students with varying learning disabilities, without committing the district, at the outset, to an ongoing programming option. The following September we opened the program as a two-year pilot project at Holyrood.

But before we could open we had to ensure we had properly trained staff. We identified the skills and knowledge that we thought the LD teacher should have: bilingual, experience in the Lindamood Auditory Discrimination Program (the work done by Joanne Boissonneault), experience in early reading intervention, knowledge of learning disabilities, good communication skills, and successful teaching experiences.

We felt that it was important that the teacher be bilingual since the intervention was to be given in English and French. In my experience with this program, it has proven to be very effective to have someone available to work in both languages. Quite often I find that if I've introduced a concept in one language, it is very easy to reinforce it in the second language. I have found tremendous gains in time and in effort by being able to speak in both languages and

teach in both languages to my students. For example, if I've taught them how to prepare for reading a non-fiction text, and I've given mini-lessons on that in French, then in the next period, if we are doing something in English, we can use the same strategies, we're using the same coping techniques. And there are studies to back this up. Malicki, Fagan, and Norman from the University of Alberta showed in their research that the way children learn to read in French and English is very similar. The major difference seems to be on integration of text-based and knowledge-based information, and for our immersion students those skills tend to be stronger in English, which is logical because they have more prior knowledge to draw from in English than they will have in French.

We included training in the Lindamood Auditory Discrimination Program in part because a study done by Daniel Demers [of British Columbia, please see the workshop "A Changing Perspective"] showed that students with auditory processing difficulties tend to be less successful in French immersion.

The teacher in LD, working with students, whether it be in English or in French, needs to have a good knowledge of phonemic awareness, as well. I found that many of the programs that the English-only program will offer, such as *Making Words* by Patricia Cunningham or the programs of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies developed in the United States by Vanderbilt are very easily translated and adaptable in French. I've spent a lot of my time adapting some of those materials in order to do the same types of activities with French; it works very well. The philosophy and the activities in the balanced literacy programs hold a lot of promise for French immersion, since they can be adapted and used in French immersion.

The part-time teacher assistant for my classroom happens to be the mother of a LD student, who left the immersion program to join a LD program, because there was no other option available at the time. Her son is now in Grade 10 and one of the honour students at his high school. I think being a mother brings another dimension to our program, sensitivity to these students. She really understands how hard they have to work. She feels their frustration with them and I think that is an important component of any LD teacher or classroom teacher for that matter. We need people with empathy to work with these students.

A big part of my job is to educate the parents about what LD is so that they can better understand their child, support their child, and advocate for their child. I also try to equip my students with enough self-assurance and enough knowledge of themselves so that once they leave they can advocate for themselves. Once they go to junior high or the next classroom, they can go up to that teacher and say: "You know, it is best for me when I tape record the session rather than just take notes, because I really have a hard time taking notes and listening at the same time. Is that an inconvenience for you? Is it possible to give me a copy of your overheads because taking notes is difficult for me...."

We do a lot of role playing in my class. We do a lot of work on self-esteem. We do a lot of work on getting the students to understand who they are in terms of learners, to see their strengths, to understand their weaknesses, and to find the coping strategies to go around the road blocks that they have.

But I am getting ahead of myself. By September, we were up and running. I started the year with 12 students, four boys and eight girls. The students were all in grades 3 and 4, they

came from various schools within Edmonton. Some students were bused considerable distances for this program.

Criteria for the program had to be established so that we could obtain the funding. Our program is for students who have a minimum of one year delay in academic achievement, at least two areas (math, word recognition or decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, written language) below the 10th percentile, and an IQ assessment of 100 or more. Extra criteria were added for a student who is in French immersion. Students, who are in immersion or a bilingual program, cannot be expected to achieve on measures of English and English writing at the norm for students who have had instruction in English. Therefore we delay testing until the end of Grade 2, when they've had a full year of instruction in English. And the second criterion is that the learning disability has to be pervasive in both languages and the testing has to be done in both languages.

We also have teacher criteria and checklists to eliminate students who have behaviour problems. It is not a program for children with behaviour problems. We do have a high proportion of students that have attention problems though; it is very interesting classroom to work in.

**CHANGE IN HLAT READING GRADE
BETWEEN 1996 AND 1997
STUDENTS IN THEIR FIRST YEAR OF LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM**

| | N | Loss of 1 grade | No change | Increase of 1 grade | Increase of two grades | Increase of 3 or more grades |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| French immersion LD program | 10 | | | 4 or 40% | 6 or 60% | |
| English LD Program Previously French immersion | 7 | | | 5 or 71% | 2 or 29% | |
| English LD | 235 | 2% | 19% | 48% | 28% | 3% |

Exhibit 1 Change in HLAT Reading Grade

I'm going to go on to the results after the program was up and running for two years. Edmonton Public central office compared the students that were in this French immersion LD program to students that had previously been in French immersion but had left to go to an English LD program. They also compared them to English only LD students, students that have never been in French immersion. The test they used is what we call HLAT, or Highest Level of Achievement Test. It is a test that all schools in Edmonton Public administer to their students in May. There is a writing component and a reading component. The reading component is basically the Canadian Test of Basic Skills. The writing component is a writing prompt, that is to say, every child is given the same story starter. Every child in our district will write on the same topic, using the same prompt, on the same day of the school year. This is done every year so that we can see growth in writing skills of students. The writing samples are then marked in terms of grade level and a rubric is developed to give the evaluator an idea of what a Grade 2 piece of writing looks like compared to a Grade 3 piece of writing. Once a grade level is assigned to the piece of writing, the marker also gives it an achievement level: adequate, proficient or excellent.

| GRADE LEVEL ON HLAT READING COMPARED WITH YEAR IN SCHOOL AFTER 1 YEAR IN LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | 3 grades below | 2 grades below | 1 grade below | At grade level | 1 year above |
| French immersion LD program | 11 | | | 2 or 18% | 9 or 82% | |
| English LD Program Previously French immersion | 7 | | | 4 or 57% | 2 or 29% | 1 or 14% |
| English LD | 235 | 10% | 9% | 39% | 46% | 3% |

Exhibit 2 HLAT Reading Level After One Year

According to the reading scores of my French immersion class after only one year of being in the program (please see Exhibit 1), 40% of my students had increased by one grade level in terms of reading. Sixty percent of them had increased by two grade levels. In the admittedly small sample of English LD students previously in French immersion, 71 percent had increased by one grade level and 29% by two grade levels. In the English program, it is a lot more varied but the majority of the students increased by one grade level. These early results, after just one year, indicated that it was going to be a fairly successful program.

The reading levels of the same three groupings were then compared to grade level (please see Exhibit 2). Eighty-two percent of my students were now reading at grade level after one year. In the English program, 46% were reading at grade level. Of the students who had been in immersion but had left to go to the English LD program, 57% were still one grade below. Again that was encouraging for the program.

In writing, 100% of my students were now at grade level compared to 40% and 42% in the other groups (please see Exhibit 3). A parent survey found that the results were very similar between the English LD parents and the French immersion parents. Parents from the French immersion LD program wrote letters to the board saying, "Please keep this program going. It's really making a difference in my child's life." That was very satisfying for me as their teacher. A staff satisfaction survey was done as well. So we had all sorts of data on the success of the program.

Nadia Rousseau from Faculté Saint-Jean studied the qualitative aspects, the emotional growth of these children, their feeling of satisfaction, their self-esteem. It was extraordinary to see these children. I had taken pictures of them the very first day of school and then I looked at the pictures at the end of the school year. You can easily see in their body language that they're no longer discouraged and unsure of themselves.

| GRADE LEVEL ON HLAT WRITING COMPARED WITH YEAR IN SCHOOL AFTER 1 YEAR IN LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | 2 grades below | 1 grade below | At grade level | 1 year above |
| French immersion LD program | 4 | | | 4 or 100% | |
| English LD Program Previously French immersion | 5 | | 3 or 60% | 2 or 40% | |
| English LD | 163 | 20% | 39% | 42% | |

Exhibit 3 HLAT Writing Level After One Year

I would loved to have been able to bring my students to talk to you. They would have told you how important this program has been for them. They've become wonderful spokesmen for themselves. I had one of my students come to the university and talk to the class I was teaching in January. This is a Grade 7 student who was brave enough to come and talk to university students. They are extraordinary, my kids.

**Facilitator: Dr. Anthony Wall, University of Calgary**

The next portion of the workshop involved a facilitated exploration by delegates of the implications for practice in their own schools and districts. The result was the identification of the following learnings:

1. Understand that French immersion students with learning difficulties can remain in French immersion if the support is there.

   Rationale: This session gave practical examples of how it is possible to give children the help they need to remain in French immersion if they have learning difficulties. Pulling a child out of immersion because of learning difficulties will not cure the problem: the child will have the same difficulties in any learning environment. However, the decision to remove a child from the immersion program can have devastating effects on the self-esteem of the child involved.

2. Better dissemination of facts and research to staff and parents through Alberta Learning, and CPF and the Learning Disabilities Association.

   Rationale: People do not generally understand that most often it is possible to keep a child with learning difficulties in the French immersion stream. Alberta Learning, CPF and the Learning Disabilities Association share the responsibility of getting this message out to parents. But educational professionals also need to know this: immersion teachers themselves, guidance counsellors, school psychologists, and other teachers.

3. Mandatory training in inclusive education at Faculté Saint-Jean through teleconferences.

   Rationale: The teacher training program for French immersion should contain a mandatory element related to children with learning difficulties and to methods of dealing with those difficulties. The aim is to give all future and present teachers the tools to make French immersion become an inclusive education. Teleconferencing and professional development opportunities can be used to give these tools to teachers already teaching French immersion.

4. Give equitable access for French immersion students to special services.

   Rationale: Children in French immersion have just as much a right to access special services as children in the traditional stream. French immersion students should not be obliged to leave French immersion in order to access these services.

ATTACHMENT

# REFERRAL COUNCIL - STUDENT REFERRAL FORM

**Student Name:** _____ **Grade:** _____

**Teacher Name:** _____ **Date:** _____

**1. The general purpose of this referral is (check as many as apply):**

☐ academic ☐ social/emotional ☐ physical health/hygiene ☐ behavioral

☐ family issues ☐ speech/language ☐ other: _____

**2. This student's strengths are (check as many as apply):**

☐ gets along with other children ☐ good in math ☐ good in reading

☐ is a good athlete ☐ is musical ☐ is artistic

☐ gets along with staff ☐ has a good imagination ☐ is creative

☐ has leadership potential ☐ is organized ☐ able to pay attention

☐ has a supportive home environment ☐ has a good sense of humour

☐ is a neat worker (i.e., printing) ☐ is cooperative ☐ wants to improve

☐ other: _____

**3. This student's areas of difficulty include (check as many as apply):**

☐ reading decoding ☐ reading comprehension ☐ spelling skills ☐ written expression

☐ oral expression ☐ inattentiveness ☐ listening skills ☐ math computation

☐ math problem solving ☐ science ☐ social studies ☐ out of seat behavior

☐ call outs ☐ verbal aggression to others ☐ physical aggression to others

☐ non-compliance with staff requests ☐ making/keeping friends ☐ running away from class

☐ other: _____

4. **What strategies/methods have been attempted/tried with this student to date and with what level of success?**

_____

_____

_____

5. **What specific information do you hope to gain from a Referral Council meeting?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

**ACTION PLAN (To be completed during Referral Council meeting)**

| What will be done? | By whom? | By when? |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

UNE DÉMARCHE PAR ÉTAPES

2001

# Modèle d'intervention progressive conçu pour offrir des services éducatifs particuliers aux élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux

Alberta
LEARNING
Direction de l'éducation française

# MODÈLE D'INTERVENTION PROGRESSIVE CONÇU POUR OFFRIR DES SERVICES ÉDUCATIFS PARTICULIERS AUX ÉLÈVES AYANT DES BESOINS SPÉCIAUX

## Première étape – mesures informelles

*L'enseignant remarque que l'élève a des besoins spéciaux.*

- L'enseignant observe attentivement l'élève et documente ses observations.

- Lors d'une rencontre individuelle avec l'élève, l'enseignant :
  - discute de ses observations;
  - évalue la motivation de l'élève et sa compréhension de la situation;
  - demande à l'élève s'il accepte de collaborer;
  - fixe avec l'élève **un ou deux objectifs à court terme** et des moyens concrets pour les atteindre;
  - fait une synthèse de la rencontre avec l'élève;
  - avise la direction de ses démarches.

- L'enseignant communique avec les parents :
  - les informe des difficultés de leur enfant;
  - discute avec eux de la situation;
  - recueille leurs perceptions;
  - crée un partenariat avec eux;
  - assure un suivi (follow-up).

- L'enseignant garde un dossier des décisions prises avec l'élève et ses parents. Ce dossier devrait contenir des notes anecdotiques, des grilles, des histogrammes, etc.

➤ Est-ce que les démarches entreprises ont permis de résoudre le problème?

Si **oui**, on en reste là. Si **non**, on passe à l'étape suivante.

**Remarque** : Dans le présent document, le générique masculin est utilisé sans aucune discrimination et uniquement dans le but d'alléger le texte.

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## Deuxième étape – mesures informelles

*L'enseignant cherche à aider l'élève en demandant du soutien auprès de ses collègues.*

- L'enseigant consulte le dossier de l'élève.

- L'enseignant discute du problème avec d'autres intervenants dans le but d'apporter un éclairage nouveau sur la perception qu'il a de l'élève et sur le contexte dans lequel ce dernier évolue. Il peut faire appel, par exemple, à :
  - un collègue;
  - au personnel de soutien, un enseignant-ressource, un professionnel non-enseignant;
  - un cercle d'entraide;
  - la direction de l'école.

- L'enseignant utilise d'autres moyens auprès de l'élève et des parents, par exemple :

  <u>auprès de l'élève</u>
  - observation plus systématique de l'élève;
  - collecte d'information sur ses forces et ses intérêts;
  - entente écrite avec l'élève précisant les comportements attendus;
  - système d'émulation;
  - contrat avec l'élève;
  - modification des stratégies d'enseignement et d'évaluation;
  - feuille de route;
  - soutien par le groupe (utilisation des pairs);
  - fiche de communication maison-école;

  <u>auprès des parents</u>

  Certaines attitudes favorisent la collaboration :
  - utiliser un langage accessible aux parents;
  - chercher des solutions ensemble;
  - assurer un suivi régulier;
  - exprimer de part et d'autre ses besoins et ses limites comme partenaires.

- L'enseignant continue de documenter ses observations et ses interventions auprès de l'élève et de ses parents.

➤ Ces nouvelles interventions ont-elles permis à l'élève de progresser suffisamment?
Si **oui**, on en reste là.
Si **non**, on répond aux questions suivantes :

- Est-ce que l'intervention dure depuis assez longtemps?
- Est-ce que plusieurs essais soutenus ont été faits?

Dans l'affirmative, on passe à l'étape suivante.

## Troisième étape – mesures formelles

*L'enseignant, avec l'aide de la direction, procède à une analyse plus poussée de la situation de l'élève.*

- L'enseignant trace un bilan de la situation à la direction de l'école et lui fait part des interventions faites auprès de l'élève et de ses parents.

- La direction rassemble les personnes directement concernées (comité spécial), et détermine un échéancier afin de réaliser **une évaluation et (ou) une consultation psychoéducative(s)**. À cette étape, il est primordial d'associer les parents et d'obtenir leur autorisation avant de procéder à l'évaluation.

- La collaboration des organismes extérieurs peut être sollicitée (Réseau provincial d'adaptation scolaire, Régie de la santé [SHIP], médecins, services sociaux, psychologues en pratique privée, etc.).

- **L'évaluation psychoéducative porte généralement sur l'apprentissage et le comportement de l'élève.** Compte tenu des outils d'évaluation, cet exercice a pour but d'éclairer l'équipe-école sur ses capacités intellectuelles (la mémoire, le langage, les styles d'apprentissage), la personnalité, le comportement, etc. Cette démarche permet également d'offrir une programmation adaptée aux besoins de l'élève.

Après l'évaluation ou à la consultation psychoéducative, la direction organise une rencontre avec les personnes concernées afin de permettre aux partenaires de s'entendre sur :

- une définition commune du problème;
- les besoins de l'élève;
- les objectifs à travailler;
- les services éducatifs adaptés.

➤ Selon les résultats de l'évaluation psychoéducative, l'élève présente-t-il les caractéristiques retenues par Alberta Learning pour fin de codification?

➤ Quels services éducatifs adaptés aux besoins de l'élève faut-il dispenser?

L'élève est identifié et aura un plan d'action ou un plan d'intervention.

## Quatrième et Cinquième étapes – services adaptés et plan d'action ou plan d'intervention

**Intervention ponctuelle et implication des partenaires**

- La direction ou la personne mandatée par celle-ci (coordonnateur) réunit les personnes concernées (les plus près de l'élève) afin de préparer le plan d'action ou le plan d'intervention.

**Les documents (plan d'action et plan d'intervention) comprennent** :

- des renseignements sur les forces et les faiblesses de l'élève;
- des objectifs à court terme;
- les moyens nécessaires pour atteindre les objectifs;
- le nom des responsables des diverses interventions;
- un échéancier pour la réalisation du plan d'intervention et pour l'évaluation du progrès.

**Des services éducatifs particuliers sont proposés, par exemple** :

- programme de modification de comportement;
- programme d'enseignement individualisé;
- retrait de la classe avec encadrement;
- service de soutien ou d'accompagnement (aide-élève, enseignant-ressource, psychologue, spécialiste du comportement, etc.).

- Les parents demeurent partenaires de l'école. La collaboration des organismes extérieurs peut être sollicitée (Réseau provincial d'adaptation scolaire, Régie de la santé [SHIP], médecins, services sociaux, psychologues en pratique privée, etc.).

**L'intervention**

- En collaboration avec les parents et les personnes concernées, le plan est appliqué, tel que décidé.
- La coordination est assumée par une personne qui facilite la réalisation du plan, centralise l'information et favorise la communication avec les membres.

**Le suivi**

- Après quatre ou six semaines, l'équipe évalue ses actions et le cheminement de l'élève et elle tient compte de l'information ainsi obtenue, jetant un regard nouveau sur la situation. Ce nouvel exercice permet de réajuster l'action et de redéfinir les objectifs.
- L'équipe s'engage de nouveau à poursuivre les objectifs du plan.

➤ Est-ce que tous les membres souscrivent au contenu du plan d'action ou plan d'intervention?

➤ Que faut-il pour que le plan soit mis en œuvre?

➤ Est-ce que la direction a besoin d'information additionnelle sur les services offerts par le conseil scolaire ou à l'extérieur de celui-ci?

➤ Est-ce que le plan se déroule selon les prévisions?

➤ Est-ce que l'intervention a permis à l'élève de progresser?

➤ Est-ce que des modifications doivent être apportées au plan d'action ou d'intervention?

Selon les réponses aux questions précédentes, l'équipe s'interroge sur la nécessité de poursuivre ou non le plan d'action ou d'intervention et de continuer à offrir les services éducatifs adaptés.

## Lectures suggérées


ALBERTA EDUCATION. *Standards for Psycho-educational Assessment*, Edmonton, 1994, 35 p.

ALBERTA EDUCATION. *Guide de l'éducation pour les élèves ayant des besoins spéciaux*, Edmonton, 1996, 33 p.

ALBERTA EDUCATION. *Le plan d'intervention personnalisé*, Edmonton, 1998, 42 p.

ALBERTA LEARNING. *Enseigner aux élèves ayant des troubles émotionnels et (ou) des psychopathologies*, Edmonton, 2000, 177 p.

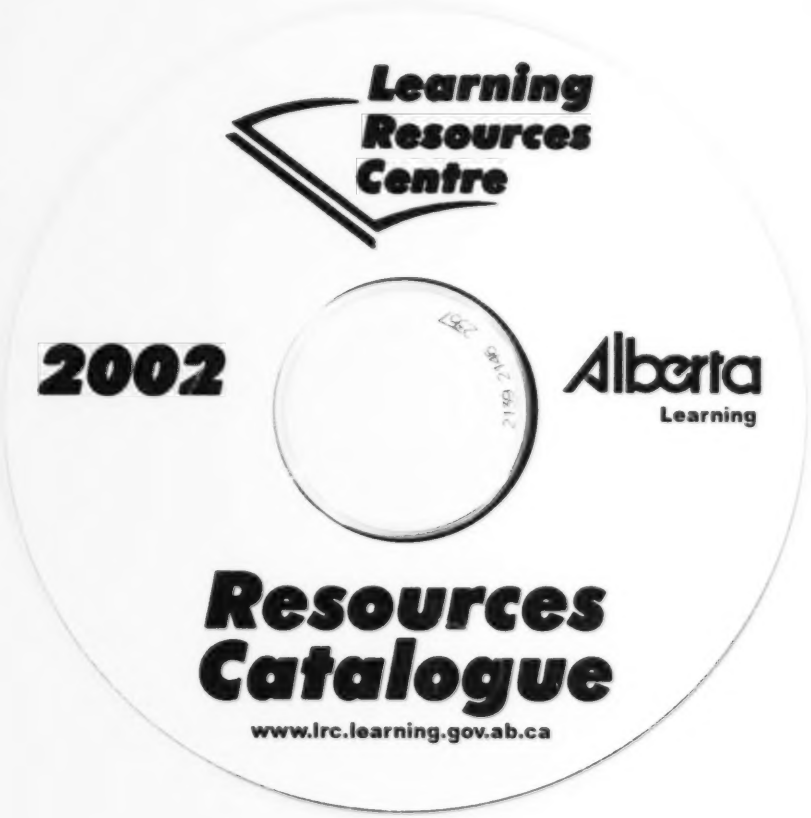
ALBERTA LEARNING. *Enseigner aux élèves ayant des troubles d'apprentissage*, Edmonton (à paraître).

ALBERTA LEARNING. *Enseigner aux élèves doués et talentueux*, Edmonton (à paraître).

LEBLANC, J. *Le plan de rééducation individualisé (PRI). Une approche prometteuse pour prévenir le redoublement*, Montréal, Chenelière/McGraw-Hill, 2000.

# Appendix H

- LRC **Resources Catalogue** on CD-ROM.





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